



**A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION
INTO THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY
IN EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

My thesis is a philosophical conversation inquiring into the concept of quality and excellence in education. It is a teasing out of conceptual strands by arguing in many different directions for what we mean by this concept. Then by clarifying, new perspectives open up. I present an argument that supports the technical appropriation of business models of quality in those aspects of state education that are preoccupied with accountability. My argument does not support the assessing of quality or of excellence in teaching with performance checklists or tests results. Philosophical texts, relevant educational literature and government papers are consulted, and these inform the analysis of conversations with teacher colleagues. The conversations give rise to a possible new theory of quality based on teachers' moral integrity and professional judgement.

I study the work of industrialists Juran and Demming and the success of the quality movement in industry in the twentieth century. I review some of the innovative practices in the 1990s that teachers engaged in following an industrial model of quality. I had philosophical conversations with colleagues and I was challenged not only by their accommodation of the new business language but also by their stories revealing that their moral integrity and professional judgement did not figure in the current concept of quality. I study the relevant philosophy of Plato and Dewey after analysing the conversations about quality that I have with practising teachers. I write dialogues as a self-study in an attempt to reconceptualise the strands of the concept of education of quality in education. I propose a theory based on moral principles that runs counter to the prevailing ethos of performativity.

The inappropriateness of the industrial model in assessing quality in education is clearly articulated in the teachers' conversations. Their stories transparently reveal that education is more a moral endeavour than a business or managerial enterprise. The stories indicate that there can be no pre determined definitive list nor any measurable means of evaluating the concept of quality that gets to the heart of the matter. There can be degrees of excellence in judging teachers' performance according to required outcomes, but this does not relate to the intrinsic aims of education. The stories offer insights into elements of quality that are valued by professional teachers and raise the question of whether it is possible to assess such excellence, or indeed if it is necessary. If these stories clarify the concepts for us, as I claim they do, how could we best proceed to use these valuable insights that contrast strikingly with equating quality with indexed quantity? Educational policy, teacher education, including continuing professional development and educational leadership are possible areas to explore further.

DECLARATION

This thesis has been composed by me and is entirely my own work.

Pamela Stagg-Jones

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to:

Doris Kathleen Roberts and James William Stagg,
My parents whose love and encouragement sustain me always.

My beloved husband Ray Jones.

My much loved sisters Editha, Marie, and Tina.

My children Peter, Paul, Christian and Penny who inspire me.

My grandchildren Sarah, Rebekah, Natasha, Veronica, Samuel, Elisabeth, William,
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CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Declaration	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of contents	v
List of abbreviations	vi
 Chapter 1 Conversation starting points	 2
Chapter 2 Who to talk to and how?	17
Chapter 3 Defining quality	46
Chapter 4 Teachers talking	108
Chapter 5 Conversations with selected philosophical texts	153
Chapter 6 Dialogues: a self-study	194
Chapter 7 Proposing a Theory	231
Chapter 8 Developing a Theory	258
Chapter 9 Telling Tales	283
Bibliography	302
Appendix A Conversation transcript: Liz Tansley	312
Conversation transcript: John Tomlinson	320
Conversation Summaries	327
Appendix B Dialogue 1 & 2	370
Dialogue 3	375
Dialogue 4	380
Dialogue 5	385
Dialogue 6 & 7	390
Dialogue 8	394

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LEA	Local Education Authority
LMS	Local Management of Schools
SAT	Standard Attainment Test
KS1	Key Stage 1
KS2	Key Stage 2
CEO	Chief Education Officer
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery office
DES	Department of Education and Science
TQM	Total Quality Management
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
BS	British Standard
EN	European Norm
ISO	International Standards Organisation
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Agency
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
GTCE	General Teaching Council of England
IEP	Individual Education Programme

**Better to light a candle
than curse the darkness.**

Ban Gu (AD 32-92) Book of Han
Translation by Haiwang Yuan

CHAPTER I

CONVERSATION STARTING POINTS

This thesis is a philosophical conversation inquiring into the concept of quality and excellence in education. It is an attempt to disentangle different strands of the concept which have been put to use in different ways for different purposes. It is clear that the quality movement in industry which started early in the 20th century has had great influence on the language and the concept of quality. It is also clear that the changes in language have become part of everyday usage and part of educational parlance too. I present an argument in the form of a philosophical conversation that accepts the contribution made by these changes but challenges the appropriateness of such acceptance into all educational endeavours. I claim that public accountability in state education in England has become more transparent since the introduction of reforms following the Great Debate of 1976, many of them founded on the procedures of a new technical understanding of quality. At the same time teachers' professional and personal autonomy has been squeezed into a trivial rather than a vital role and this diminishment has obscured rather than revealed the true nature of educational quality and excellence.

In the process of this investigation, I examine policy documents, educational literature and philosophical texts. I engage in recorded conversations with teacher colleagues in my effort to understand what is intended by the concept of quality. I then write a set of imagined dialogues in an attempt to reconceptualise the strands of the concept for myself. Finally I propose a tentative theory of quality based on the stories teachers related in their conversations. These stories exemplify and give credence to certain moral principles as the foundation of quality and excellence in education. I argue that it is the interaction between teacher and learner (the input) rather than the results (the

outcomes), which generates educational quality and excellence. Such a theory runs counter to the prevailing ethos of performativity.

Personal background

I have experienced teaching in small and large schools and was deputy head of a large urban school before I became head teacher of The Hendreds, a small rural school in Oxfordshire. As the head teacher I was able to organise all educational issues by myself, either with the staff or with advisory support from the LEA. The introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS) in 1988 was the beginning of changes that continued for the next 15 years. My school was involved in the preparation for the pilot stages of the National Curriculum and Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) at Key stage one (KS1). In 1990, after 27 years teaching in primary schools in England and Scotland, I resigned from my headship as my husband was relocated to Houston, Texas in the USA. After re-qualifying in the USA I took up a class teaching post there until I retired in 1998. I kept in close touch with many teaching colleagues in both the USA and England, especially those who had formed the Ridgeway Federation of Small Schools. This federation enabled several small rural schools in the same area of Oxfordshire to encourage and support each other, to collaborate in joint projects by sharing staff and parental expertise, and by sharing resources and expeditions. I did not experience first hand the changes made in England during the 1990s, though I too was challenged by changes in a different country with a different system of education. In taking up the teaching post in my local district in Texas I lived through changes that challenged and concerned me. I went from being head teacher of a primary school with about 100 children in rural Oxfordshire to being a class teacher in an elementary school with 980 students in suburban Houston, Texas. Adapting to a different culture was difficult enough, but not insurmountable. The more difficult challenges and deeper concerns were centred on the underlying philosophy of education which was highly competitive and further advanced along the market forces path than schools in England were. The

teaching experience in Texas gave me a picture of what I envisaged teaching in England might become if the same path was followed.

Throughout my career I have always taken great pride in my work as a teacher and talked with teaching colleagues, parents, friends and business people about how they viewed quality and excellence in education. It was the White Paper, *Teaching Quality*, in 1983 that first alerted me to changes in the meaning of quality in education. This paper more than irritated me; it seemed to have got it wrong. After 1983 I became more focussed and discussed the technical view of quality put forward by friends in the engineering profession in more detail. The concept of quality was clearly defined for finished products and had a lot to offer in terms of management, but I believed that it could not include important aspects of a teacher's concept of quality in education. Teachers and parents gave examples of quality schools and excellent teaching/teachers which were all about teachers interacting with children. The concept of 'quality' puzzled me. By 1987 when I became head teacher, the insensitive closure of neighbouring small schools made me more fully aware of the implications of government policy taking place in education and this compounded my dissatisfaction. The experience of teaching in a very large school in the USA gave me a different perspective. Tests and results were the definitive measures of quality. I believed the American system indicated the direction that the UK was heading.

I do not intend to furnish the socio-political background of the teachers who are part of my research nor of these times and changes. I understand that each of us is positioned in society in different ways, a positioning that has important consequences for our ability to be part of or excluded from the means to contribute and/or respond to societal changes. Although such issues are raised as part of the teachers' conversations they are not significant in the overall philosophical nature of this particular on-going conversation. All the teachers I worked with on both continents are sensitive to their positions in society and in their schools, and are aware of the political nature of the changes and the reasons for them. The background of how they each understood themselves in relation to society in general and to educational policy in particular is additional interesting

knowledge but is not necessary, I claim, for the philosophical understanding of the concept of quality in this thesis. If I were to discuss these issues in an attempt to make the background sharper it would be in reference to Nussbaum and her discussion of *tuche* (translated as luck), in *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986) rather than Thatcherism and its continuing influence since the 1970s. I chose not to include either.

I had questions about quality that were not answered by anything I had read. Quality was complicated, not straightforward; there were bits of the quality movement that I understood and admired but there were other areas that really confused me and all of it concerned me. I wanted to sort out exactly what I was concerned about. These concerns arose from different meanings of quality in the White Paper *Teaching Quality* (1983), and at the same time from the growing trend to bigger primary schools which were perceived to be of a higher quality. Initially I was confident that I could show in my research how small schools were more likely to exhibit what I meant by high quality. But before my research got underway I realised that the much broader concern about what was meant by quality education, regardless of size of school, was the underlying and more compelling issue that had to be attended to first. My general concerns were sharpened by my realisation that small schools were judged as *uneconomic*, that more *efficient* use of teachers and *resources* was a higher priority than the education provided, and that *market economy* jargon was entering school policy. The closure of small schools and the creation of more *economic* units for educational purposes coupled with the language of *manufacturing industries* implies a philosophy of education with an attendant value system based on competitive market forces. It is this philosophy and value system that is much more of a concern to me than researching into the advantages of small schools.

Many questions energised the beginning of this research: 'Is the present underlying philosophy of quality truly educational?' 'Isn't something educationally important left out?' 'What does quality in education mean?' From these questions more arose: 'What is a quality education?' 'Where does excellence play its part?' 'What does it mean to have high quality or poor quality teachers, high quality education, to have a quality

education, an excellent education?’ ‘What does it mean when I say a teacher is excellent or a child has given me excellent work?’ ‘What is it to be an excellent teacher?’ ‘Is quality always high quality and is excellence related to it in some special way?’ ‘Who decides on what is quality education?’ The questions presented themselves and seemed to proliferate the more I thought about them. This is what occurs in philosophy. The research title that I finally framed in the hope of finding answers to some of these questions was: ‘A philosophical conversation inquiring into the concept of quality in education’ and my research question is: ‘What does the concept of quality in education mean?’

Relevance of this research

To understand what drives the system of education is to understand its philosophy, and to understand its philosophy gives a clearer idea of what its aims are and what values uphold these aims. Education is a living, growing and changing concept because it is centred on learning and teaching, which are activities about living, growing and changing. Any system of state education that defines the boundaries of serious debate (thereby precluding some other definitions) is in danger of becoming non-living, non-growing and non-changing. This thesis engages in a serious debate about the present system of education and its underlying philosophy. This is because, as I will argue, teaching is primarily a moral, as distinct from a technical or contractual responsibility. If we as teachers in state schools (public schools in the USA), fully understand what the government’s aims for education are we may align ourselves with them or decide if and how we can compromise and work with them; or if we cannot compromise, we can decide to leave the profession. Whatever we do, we need to find the means to voice our concerns. This thesis is voicing mine. It is also voicing the concerns of teacher colleagues who supported my research and agreed to have taped conversations with me so that I could analyse what quality and excellence in education means to us. We all had examples of quality schools, excellent teaching or teachers to give. My colleagues wanted to discuss how they could retain the essential ingredients they thought were

necessary but which were difficult to accommodate under the present system. Where could they compromise? Where *should* they compromise? We were resolved not to allow our individual beliefs to be substantially undermined in ways that we thought were critically important. They gave me their full support in trying to work out some sort of understanding of how we could maintain our beliefs and give voice to our concerns about how and why we felt compromised. In proposing a theory based on two moral principles, namely to act with moral integrity and to be aware of unpredictable outcomes, I argue for contextual universality that will extend the relevance of my research to all teachers.

By 2002 and 2003 teachers in England and Texas, had broadly similar worries, with what seemed to them an over-reliance on test results and schools graded according to what these results were. In Texas there were attendant funding issues. I perceived the market mentality that drove both education systems as a threat, as did each of those who conversed with me. When I retired in 1998, taking on the research role was my way of getting to grips with my problem of finding out what quality meant in a system of education based on an industrial model, and why I saw that as a threat. I knew that I wanted to continue discussions with my colleagues and that these discussions would take the form of conversations. This was the usual method of our reflection and debate. I did not envisage 'a severed head' (Daly, 1984, p 253, quoted in Griffiths, 1988) approach to a philosophical problem, but one centred on the teachers who were working in the classroom. This thesis is written in a personal, conversational manner, following on from the way it was conceived and carried out.

The conversations that I taped and transcribed for more detailed work on the meaning of quality in education will be fully described in Chapter 4. Appendix A gives further details about each conversationalist and a summary of their conversations, along with two entire transcripts. I refer to each person by their first name only, except in the following paragraph, where I offer a brief introduction to the people who helped me in this way.

At the time of my conversations in England my teaching colleagues who came from the above-mentioned Ridgeway Federation were: Liz Tansley, who took over as head teacher at The Hendreds School when I left for Texas; Frankie Porter, her senior teacher and Hannah Yates and Cassandra Dinkelman, two newly qualified, young teachers on her staff; David Vickers, head teacher of Childrey; Stuart Taylor, head teacher of Stockham and Jill Dovey the deputy head there; Sue Mantell, head teacher of St Mary's Didcot and Alison Boyd, the deputy head. Other friends include: Professor John Tomlinson and Vivienne Little of the Education Department at Warwick University, Emily Bower, special needs teacher in Warwickshire, Tina Skett, newly qualified teacher in Northampton, Margaret Parton and Lynn Steel, school secretaries and parents, Sara Bowen, parent helper, Mike Steel, governor, parent and business manager with quality responsibilities in the UK and USA, and Tony Kenyon, parent and managing director of large electronics manufacturing plants in the UK and USA responsible for all aspects of quality.

The colleagues from the United States who conversed with me include: Bonny Cain, Superintendent of Pearland Independent School District, Texas; Denise Petrie, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; and the following, who are teachers in elementary schools in the district: Lynn Kincaid, Christie Jarrell, Cindy Schnaubelt, Crissie Emmons, Michelle Gonzales and Sue Veach. Marilyn Andrus works with special needs students in the High School and Kathy Shatto is a speech pathologist in the same district. Joanne Juran was a High School principal who became a home-schooler, teaching her two sons at home. Kerry Tinklepaugh was a newly qualified young teacher in New York State. There is a further teacher who wishes to remain anonymous, to whom I have given the name 'Ethel Bagshot'.

Procedures: thinking, reading, talking and writing

Delving into Hogan (1995) and Nussbaum (1996), I read the history of the idea of sovereignty of learning and the cultivation of humanity, all the time searching for the meaning of quality in education. I examined selected works of Plato, Locke, Rousseau and Dewey and continued to examine the ideas of the role of the state's authority and both the extrinsic and intrinsic aims of education. In doing this I was seeking a clearer idea of the concept of quality in education. I read texts on the revolution in quality control in the manufacturing industries, and texts by many teachers who had implemented some of these technical ideas in their schools and classrooms, all the while seeking for connections that clarified the concept.

The conversations I conducted with my teaching colleagues informed my endeavour at all stages of the thesis. These enabled me to relate my colleagues' philosophies of education to their practice of teaching. Their practice in turn enabled me to interrogate the philosophy. The analysis of the conversations led me to write a set of dialogues in which I closely examine my own ideas, along with my colleagues' ideas and ideas from the texts I had read, on the purpose of education and how to achieve the best possible. I juxtapose the philosophical investigation into quality with the conversations of my colleagues to discover what it is that drives teachers to maintain their sense of quality within a system which seems to undermine their own values. It was from the ongoing conversations and these dialogues that I discovered not only the profound importance of stories that teachers had related in their attempts to define quality, but also that there are possibly underlying principles deriving from these stories that mark out what I mean by quality of education. The idea of stories as a tentative basis for a theory of quality is examined more closely in my concluding chapter.

Plan of the thesis

I have not followed the typical plan for a thesis. I place the methodology chapter immediately after the Introduction because it is important to make clear that the thesis rests on both a philosophical and a practical approach. This is not exactly philosophy as usual, nor is it research into the practice of teaching. It is a philosophical methodology in thinking and arguing in an investigative manner, but whilst I am working towards a more adequate or more incisive understanding of what is meant by quality in education, I am using examples from the practice of teaching as a means to such an understanding. I think it is necessary to give this rationale before the review of definitions and interventions in Chapter 3, since it is the methodology that dictates a different approach to that chapter also. Chapter 3 is a review of ideas rather than of any set literature. It was important to state my problem, which arose from one government document, *Teaching Quality* (1983), but also to give an overview of industrial understanding of the 'quality revolution' and how that had impacted on some teachers in their schools or classrooms. It is a review of the ideas and proposed interventions that have influenced me. I give fuller arguments for these decisions in each of the relevant chapters.

The chapters describing the conversations, the philosophical readings and the dialogues, which are Chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively, are not necessarily linear. I could have arranged them in a different order, but I placed the conversation chapter after the literature one so that the voices of the teachers and their concerns with education could be heard immediately after the review of definitions and interventions. The teachers' use of metaphor and the stories contained in their conversations form the backbone of the ensuing chapters of the thesis, since it is in the metaphors that I hear the teachers' underlying philosophies and it is in the stories that I find their interpretation of the concept of quality and excellence in education. This will be elaborated more fully in Chapter 4.

I then introduce the philosophical texts, in Chapter 5. I turned to these texts in response to the teachers' conversation for two specific reasons. The first is that state control of education, individual freedoms and more specifically teachers' professional judgement were the cause of much discontent that was disclosed in the conversations. The philosophers I chose defend these concerns in different ways. The second reason is that each of the teachers' stories was underpinned by a sense of excellence which I argue is related to the ancient Greek concept of *arete*. The study of the philosophical texts shows that the concepts of education and of excellence are both difficult to define and constantly in need of clarification, since interpretations change as society changes. I argue that reflecting on and discussing these concepts in education may not result in precise definitions but are an essential part of high quality teaching practice, since beneficial actions which might otherwise not have been taken occur after such reflection. The philosophical texts serve to further my argument that we may not arrive at undisputed end points, but in the process of reflecting and thinking we may become aware of the depth and breadth of these concepts in a way that influences us and makes our teaching more sensitive. These texts and the ideas promoted in them can be read in support of the educational concerns expressed and difficulties experienced in discussing the concept of quality. The dialogues in Chapter 6 are written as a self-study. They enable me to understand better some of the educational ideas that are important to me, the teachers and the texts in investigating the concept of quality in education. Chapters 7 and 8 are two parts of a proposal moving towards a tentative theory of quality arising from the foregoing chapters. The concluding chapter gives more thought to the importance of the stories in understanding quality in education, and asks questions which could further this research and continue the conversation.

Chapter summaries

Who to talk to and how? (Chapter 2)

I decided that a philosophical investigation was the most appropriate methodology for what I wanted to do, and I argue for conversation as a valid method within philosophy. The tenor of the entire thesis is one of philosophical conversation. I indicate the difference between conversation and dialogues: briefly the former are unscripted, live discussions whereas the latter are imagined or fictional debates written as a means of examining, in conversational style, the concepts under review. The methodology is unusual in four distinct ways briefly explained here, but on which I elaborate in the following chapter. Firstly, the evaluation of ideas given in the chapter on definitions and interventions is not a conventional literature review. It is mainly a background to my continuing efforts to understand the concept of quality as it impinges on my professional life rather than a background of relevant socio-political literature. Secondly, the inclusion of conversations, which energises the entire thesis, is unusual if not unique in that I claim the conversations reveal the power of exploratory discussion to uncover philosophical and practical issues in a way that would not otherwise be possible. The inclusion of philosophical texts as a further means of conversation, bringing philosophers' voices to support or challenge the teachers' views, is the third distinctive strand. The imagined dialogues, in which I converse with myself and others in order to clarify the concepts, is the fourth strand of the methodology. The overall conversation is ended after I propose a tentative theory, and raise further questions, following usual philosophical practice.

Defining Quality: interventions proposing quality (Chapter 3)

There are four distinct parts to this review. I start with an autobiographical response to a policy document, namely *Teaching Quality* (1983), and its critique *The Quality Controllers* (1985). These documents made me question what was meant by the concept

of quality in education. It did not seem to be what I thought it was. I then research the recent history of the concept of quality, finding it had acquired a highly technical meaning in the industrial world and is of great value in that area. In the manufacturing, and subsequently in the business worlds, this industrial definition of quality evolved to carry a broader understanding, less technical but still highly prescribed. I argue that this technical application has usefulness in the administration of schools and to some extent can answer the question, 'What is a quality school?' Such technical application does not, however, help answer the question, 'What is a quality education?' This separation gave me insight into what was intended by the new thrust for accountability, but at the same time it alerted me to many areas that were not applicable to education. Chapter 3 continues with a review of the work of some teachers who worked with this new technical approach to quality and what they found to be successful, or otherwise, during the 1990s. For some, the effectiveness model was acceptable. For others it was not. I conclude this review of definitions and proposed interventions about quality and excellence by looking at the interpretations implied in the latest White Paper, *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003), where I find more confusion than clarification on what exactly is meant by quality or excellence.

Teachers talking: conversations (Chapter 4)

The conversations were analysed for their metaphors and their stories and it was in the course of this analysis that I became aware how powerful the technical 'quality' metaphors are. I argue that there is evidence of both surface acceptance of prevailing metaphors and of a different embedded use of metaphor. I also realise the importance of the stories in understanding the concepts of quality and excellence. In Appendix A I give summaries of each conversation and I include two complete transcripts. The conversations open up into philosophical statements about what education is for, who should make decisions, who is responsible. Lacking professional authority under the present authoritarian system, teachers are discouraged and find compromise difficult from a moral point of view. Their stories of quality or excellence give me an insight into

what excellence means to each of these different teachers. Each of the stories of quality that I recorded exemplifies teachers using their professional judgements, and these judgements reflect the morality of these teachers. Their passion for education is articulated in their conversations and more specifically in their stories. The undervaluing of teachers' professionalism became the focus of the conversations and I therefore claim a connection between this devaluation, sometimes called the de-skilling of teachers, and the rise of a theory of quality based on the industrial model. I argue here that excellence is context dependent and that the individual stories reveal not only a great deal about the teachers' philosophy of education but that they are an important key in understanding other difficult concepts as well as those of quality or excellence in education.

Conversations with selected philosophical texts (Chapter 5)

In the chapter on philosophers I include Plato, Locke, Rousseau and Dewey in the conversation in order to discuss the ideas of excellence and the authority of the state, which the conversations revealed were of concern to the teachers. I elaborate on the idea of *arete*, translated from classical Greek as 'excellence', and also on the involvement of the state in defining education and its role in society. The difficult questions of how much the state should dictate and for what purpose are teased out in this chapter. These more abstract themes emerge from the conversations and dialogues as key issues so it is on them that I focus rather than on any in-depth philosophical explanation of quality from the chosen texts. From the authoritarian style of Plato to the romantic freedom of Rousseau, each philosopher tells something important about morality and each criticises the prevailing notions of education at their time; both are issues of importance in the conversations. I argue that the debate must remain open to advance understanding and to ensure a proper place for the professionalism of teachers and their experience. Such considerations should be given respect even if (and because) they lead to the influence of new and radical thinking. If we close our minds we close avenues for learning. This is true for both teachers and children, as Noddings suggests:

I am arguing simply that an excellent system of education would allow students [and teachers] to pursue their legitimate interests fully. There would be testing to uncover talents of which children might be unaware, but the results would always be used to open opportunities — never to close them. (Noddings, 1992, p 7.)

Dialogues: a self-study (Chapter 6)

The dialogues chapter takes a different turn in the overall conversation. Here, in imagined conversations with myself, I argue for the necessity of reflection in order to understand difficult concepts. Having made the difference between conversations and dialogues clear in the methodology chapter, in Chapter 6 I examine three of the eight dialogues written as a result of my analysis of the issues raised in the conversations. Appendix B gives the 5 dialogues not used in the text. This self-study enabled me to perceive my research in a different way and further my study by taking time to reflect on my own deeply held beliefs and how they affected my teaching, my interaction with my colleagues and my research.

Proposing and developing a theory (Chapters 7 and 8)

Examination of the conversations and the dialogues brought me to a new concept of quality that was based not on outcomes (as the present model in schools) but rather on the interaction between teachers and learners. I argue for two principles upon which to base assessment of quality and excellence: namely 'to act with moral integrity' and 'to be aware of unpredictable outcomes.' These principles, I claim, are universal in a contextual environment. The discussion of universals and of moral statements further leads me to claim that my argument cannot succeed on principles alone; the role of stories is not just an added elaboration, exemplification or illustration but an integral part, a necessary part, an original part of this theory.

The conclusions from each of the chapters relate to each other as part of an ongoing philosophical conversation. The methodology chapter, 'Who to talk to and how?' argues for conversation as a valid method of investigation, and the review of ideas in the definitions chapter is presented in the form of debate. The recorded conversations and dialogues steer the ongoing discussion towards a theory based on the understandings garnered from the stories told in the process of conversation. This thesis is a philosophical discussion in conversational form, from which I have drawn new ideas on the importance of teachers' voices, both in terms of their professional voices and in their telling tales. I take from Galea's thesis the belief that both the researched and the researcher are changed in the process of thinking philosophically.

...the notion of philosophy as a practice of thinking differently that shapes and transforms one's way of life..." (Galea, 2002, p 41).

I proceed now to Chapter 2, the methodology chapter.

CHAPTER 2

WHO TO TALK TO AND HOW?

This thesis is a philosophical inquiry into the concept of quality in education. It takes the form of a philosophical conversation rather than the more usual, modern method of first examining apposite texts and then arguing a different position supported by relevant reading, interpretation and argument. In this chapter I explain how the thesis is to be understood as a philosophical conversation about quality focused on ideas from educational policies, industrial procedures, practising teachers and philosophers' writings. There are four different strands in the methodology each of which can be interpreted as a form of philosophical conversation. They are: a review of definitions of quality and selected quality interventions, recorded conversations with practising teachers, a review of apposite philosophical texts and finally conversation with myself in the form of dialogues. None are representative of philosophy as usual nor are they research into teachers' practices. From these four strands I argue for a possible theory of quality based on moral principles. In this chapter I detail the four strands first and then discuss the overall methodology and method.

Defining quality

The chapter on definitions and quality interventions is a review of ideas that have influenced me and, I claim, other teachers too. Quality interventions appear in policy documents, in industrial procedures and in accounts of teachers' innovative practices. It will be explained in the following chapter why I used an autobiographical approach. It is an important methodological departure from standard literature reviews and one that I argue advances the aims of this research in that it promotes understanding of the background changes affecting the concept of quality. This review advances my research because it is investigating the practical implications of applying technical

interpretations; the results of applying these interpretations and the responses to policy documents.

This review is in four sections and is part of the overall methodology which is seeking to capture the spirit of philosophical conversation. The background reading and the texts that are referred to are always present in live conversations, but are not drawn on in the same way that academic writings properly expect. It is the ideas represented, the interpretations, the individual perceptions that come to life in conversation and so it is the background of the relevant ideas that I have written about in this review. I begin with the policy document, *Teaching Quality* (1983), and its critique, *The Quality Controllers* (Slater et al 1985), that influenced both my colleagues and myself and set in motion the conversation of this thesis. The review of the industrial quality movement in the second section gives an introduction to the importance of the quality movement in industry in the 20th century. It forms the background to the conversations I had about quality with engineers involved in industry. This section is important also for understanding the current educational use of the concepts of quality control, customers and total quality management. The literature that I subsequently review in section three is of teachers' responses to the implementation of some of the industrial strategies and concentrates on some concepts of quality control, the primacy of customers, and total quality management. These concepts are of fundamental importance because of the relationship between the practice of teaching and the concepts of quality and excellence. The final policy document in the fourth section highlights the use of language and the shifts in interpretation that I argue reveal underlying philosophical views of education. None of the above is literature in the usual sense of background reading for an academic thesis, but I defend it on the grounds that it forms the background to the ideas that have been influential in the practice of 'quality' teaching, whether of the industrial model or not.

Conversations

The conversations are another important departure from philosophy as usual. Conversations are a part of philosophic method in that discussion is subjected to challenge or support and is responded to in the conventional manner of live conversation. I make the distinction between conversations and dialogues in both the chapter on conversations and the chapter on dialogues. Suffice it to say at this stage that for this thesis taped conversations, which are transcribed, analysed and discussed, form the most important practical element of the argument. The dialogues here are an imagined conversation, or a reported conversation that have been edited and dramatised for a specific purpose. It is dialogue in this sense that is more usual in philosophy.

I want to use conversation in the widest possible sense of interacting with texts and ideas using a dialectical or dialogic approach. Each part of the thesis can be understood as part of a conversation. But the live conversations that are the springboard of this thesis are most important for several reasons. They give voice to practitioners in a way that not many other methodologies provide. It is a departure from usual philosophic enquiry in that dialogue, as in Plato, rather than conversation in this sense, would be used. I claim to promote practising teachers' ideas on quality education and excellence in a way that I have not found used elsewhere. The use of unscripted, unforced conversations among teaching practitioners in order to further philosophic considerations is unusual and may be unique for this research purpose. Both the researcher and most of the conversationalists are primary classroom teachers. I have used their voices, along with my own, to understand the nature of the concept at work in the everyday life of teaching.

The nature of enquiry into a concept is such that it admits its own logical consequences and enters a discourse which, as Aristotle tells us in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, must be appropriate.

It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits; it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician demonstrative proofs.... Each man judges well the things he knows, and of these he is a good judge. (*Nicomachean Ethics* book 1 §1094 b 12)

Aristotle continues by explaining that living and experience are what give authority to judge and that rational thinking, - or use of rational principle according to David Ross (1980), - is what brings great benefit.

The unique voices of the teachers I converse with are discussing things of which they have knowledge and experience. They are speaking not only of lives lived in teaching but also of lives lived as learners. The concept of quality in education has to be considered from the standpoints of both the teacher and the learner since they are mutually dependent. I include here the standpoint that I have taken throughout the thesis that when I write about quality of excellence in teaching I am by inference, writing about learning quality. Excellent teaching cannot be considered without including learning both from the teachers and the pupils' perspective. I elaborate on this more fully in the theory chapter.

The teachers' ideas on the concept of quality and excellence are captured in live conversations which embrace their attitudes to many associated ideas such as their general philosophies of education, practical implications, practices that are or are not conducive to quality, discussions on excellence and reflections on how difficult such concepts are, as well as concern that they may not be able to give the kind of education they know is true to their commitment. The conversations with many of my colleagues are still continuing: they were not a 'one off' report. They reveal both these teachers' intense involvement in practical methods and their abilities to discuss theoretical concepts at an objective level. They know that these concepts are worth discussing and they commit themselves to remaining instinctively and rationally focused on the relationship between teacher and learner. That is why I can examine these conversations to discover their philosophy of education without ever having asked that question, and

why I can understand their conceptual grasp of quality and excellence from their descriptions and telling tales.

In using the conversations of my colleagues I am invoking methods that would be recognisable in other forms of educational research, especially in the social science disciplines. But these conversations are not to be construed as interviews or their analysis as discourse analysis. Though the words of my colleagues are used in support of differing perspectives and I analyse and attempt a categorisation, there is no intention of making this a qualitative social science thesis. My data, if they can be called that, are derived from a small sample, and it is in no sense a random sample of teachers' views on quality, nor is it an attempt to speak *for* those teachers. The conversations are genuine conversations among my teaching friends. As such they are like the beginnings and ends of most philosophical enquiries.

Plato openly uses conversations in the form of dialogues, as do contemporary philosophers Midgley (2005) and Law (2003), but other philosophical works have arisen from interaction (conversation) with previous texts or unresolved problems and most philosophy once written is debated heavily. This is what philosophy consists in. This research has been collaborative, as good conversations always are, but again this reaches back to philosophy in the style of its collaboration. This collaboration is not the kind that could indicate Action Research as a methodology for this thesis, though we who collaborated have each of us benefited from this interaction. Teachers firmly grounded in their classroom practices are both reflecting upon their philosophy of education and on their concept of quality. Action Research could have this interaction and reflection but it would be centred on a project or a specific aim. The interaction with teaching colleagues and with my supervisors and co-students has been for the philosophical conversation itself. This is what has shaped the argument of this thesis, which is philosophical albeit grounded in the practice of teaching.

The recorded conversations were set up in order to talk about quality. This method allowed insights that could not have been obtained through other means such as interviews or questionnaires. A live conversation, even with an indicated focus, reveals thoughts and ideas in an informal and often passionate manner. These conversations are not little cosy chats, nor after dinner ramblings. They are examples of how we engaged with each other on matters that deeply affected us. The connection that we had with each other, the trust that friendship defines, and the wholehearted entry into the difficult areas of concern are characteristics of these recorded conversations. I claim that these philosophical discussions, situated in the practice of teaching, give a unique glimpse into high quality teachers in action. I elaborate more fully in this in Chapter 4 on conversations.

These are discussions amongst voices that deserve to be heard and should be heard as they are part of the educational debate. They speak against the growing emphasis on quality as indexed quantity. There are many research voices speaking in this vein, (Carr, 1997; Griffiths, 1998; Hogan, 1995; Nussbaum, 1986; Rozema, 2001; Smith, 2001) but they are not primary school teachers. My conversations are conducted by a primary school teacher, not primarily as an educational researcher, certainly not as an outsider, but as a colleague. There are advantages and disadvantages in this relationship from the point of view of objectivity but authenticity and a connected understanding must be an advantage of consequence.

Plato shows us that conversation is the medium best suited to both philosophy and teaching at the same time. From his dialogues, which are based on real conversations, he develops a conceptual map from which we can find many different routes to many differing boundaries. The teachers' conversations revealed a tension between state mandates and individual autonomy in the classroom. Investigating this tension is a fundamental philosophical discussion. It is not a question of reconciling priorities for teachers. It is a genuine struggle about teaching in the public sector of education with all the demands and the threats of the present system which compromise deeply held

individual beliefs. Further, it is not simply a question of compromise and/or compatibility either; it is dealing with necessary incoherence and recognising it as such. It is a clash of deeply held principles and this dilemma is a proper subject for a Socratic conversation. As I explain later in this chapter, it is particularly suited to a study in practical philosophy.

In order to dramatise his arguments Plato used conversations to reveal both the arguments for and against the concepts under discussion. It is entirely in his style and philosophy that he used conversation to draw out what was already known but up to that point never voiced, or recognised. The conversations that I am involved with are not of this nature but are still within the philosophic methodology of drawing out by discussion. The conversations may have included many other issues, many different concerns and stories, but I want to make it clear that this style of discussing and arguing and finding logical errors or inconsistencies is part of a philosophical investigation. It is necessary to give time and space for good conversations to develop, and though few words or examples may be used in this thesis, the many directions that the interests and understanding of the teachers brought to the discussion gave me the chance to understand for myself what the concept of quality means. Sometimes it is necessary to wander off the path in order to recognise the path we need to take. In the preface to *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1976) writes,

The nature of investigation....compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction. (p vii)

The role of conversations is also described by Denzin and Lincoln as part of the phenomenological tradition which is

... a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including...conversations... attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (Denzin and Lincoln,

2000, p 3).

They elaborate further:

Conversation entails listening. The listener's response may constitute a probe into experience that takes the representation of experience far beyond what is possible in an interview. Indeed, there is probing in conversation, in-depth probing, but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening and caring for the experience described by the other...we see the centrality of relationship among the researchers and the participants. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p 422).

This phenomenological methodology is the most appropriate given the nature of the investigation. The centrality of the relationship is indeed the most important aspect not only of the conversations, but of the subject matter too. Relationships evidenced in the subject matter of the conversations, in the method (the conversations) and in the methodology (philosophical conversation) are the subject matter of the concept of quality.

It is the priority of relationships in educational practice situated in classrooms and schools, as told in the teachers' personal stories, which informs the theoretical philosophy of my thesis. The philosophical investigation in turn analyses the educational issues and returns to the teachers. As Griffiths claims, when writing about both philosophy and education in, *Why Teachers and Philosophers Need Each Other* (1997), "Educational research will only flourish if a means is found to keep communication open about both perspectives" (p 191). Her paper is a discussion of philosophy as a method in educational research. I am consulting Griffiths' methodology in order to construct a theory of quality.

Conversations: language and metaphors

As part of the methodology I begin to interpret the underlying philosophy of education from the conversations of the teachers involved. Unlike the conversations themselves,

this method of investigation is not unusual. The analysis of the metaphors and language used both by my conversationalists and in the texts studied assists in my interpretations at this stage. A further study of metaphors develops and can be found in Chapter 4. Looking at the language, and particularly at the metaphors, one can identify interesting sub currents. (Collins, 1990; Lakoff, 1980). Whether it is a building that they are constructing, or a garden that they are cultivating, teachers' use of different metaphors indicates different approaches to understanding the concept of education. Differing metaphors support different fundamental philosophies of education. I consider other influences, such as the power of accepted metaphors and education-speak or jargon when analysing the conversations.

Metaphors are a study in themselves and I include only a brief survey in support of the argument that there is an unvoiced struggle in the language used. The accepted language of the official documents has become part of the language of all teachers because there is no other language available. So, for instance, 'delivery', 'customer' and 'product' are no longer metaphors but part of the every day currency of writing and talking about education. Coupled with this are the metaphors of the teachers' own choice which are not consistent with this 'business speak'. There is evidence of both kinds of metaphor in the conversations and this gives strength to the argument that some metaphors become absorbed into language through usage while others reveal more of an individual belief. It is for this reason that I feel this research is important. If we are not aware of the changes in concepts we can do nothing about the understanding we have, which may or may not become side lined. Language changes will occur anyway. If we raise our voices because we feel something important is being overlooked or worse, lost, we may find the language to redress the balance. It is that language which I claim we are deprived of in the current production-quality language (Smith, 2001) and it is the study of metaphors that unravels where we have taken up the language of the market and where we have not.

Conversations: stories

The interpretation of the narratives, including the use of metaphor, is called upon to inform further understanding of the concept of quality. The analysis of the conversations brings about a change in the direction of the thesis. Metaphors reveal or conceal ideas depending on interpretation. Stories, however are openly and clearly examples of excellence and become the focus of attention at this stage of the argument. They often came unsolicited and incidental in a most natural manner as part of the usual way that we, as conversationalists, talked to each other as friends and colleagues. It was clear to me at the time of taping the conversations that teachers told stories when I probed into what they mean by quality or excellence. I did this myself when the question was returned to me. This is not new. Stories have always been used as far back as we have written history. Oral tradition predates written history suggesting that stories have been a part of emerging civilisations as well as part of existing civilisations that have not elaborated a written code (as in Native American history for instance). Stories are both more stimulating and intelligible than definitions and more explanatory than checklists when a difficult concept is being debated. Teachers regularly use stories to teach and elaborate concepts like honesty, bravery, justice and so on. It is from the stories related in response to discussions about quality and excellence that I subsequently propose a theory of quality based on moral principles.

By looking closely at these stories I could not categorise them in any general way. I am delighted to find they could not be made into a checklist as some were diametrically opposed to each other, with teachers employing opposite strategies. For instance, a 'strict' teacher and a 'laid back' teacher are both cited as examples of excellence. But I did find underlying principles, moral principles which then became the basis of a possible alternative theory. However I wish to add here that even as these principles present themselves I remain convinced that it is the stories that offer a possible theory of quality. The principles are empty without the stories, much like Kant's concepts are empty without content. The stories are diverse and offer many analyses in terms of

understanding an underlying philosophical theory. They offer individual educational perspectives but also the possibility of a theory of quality. Stories remain the most significant vehicle for carrying these ideas. Theory based on principles offers little without the stories, and principles are so generalised that they are open to many interpretations. The stories give us examples that focus on how the principle can be applied. The principles are the skeleton, or the structure that is generic to the species; the stories are the flesh, the features giving the unique characteristics. I discuss this more fully in Chapter 8. Together, the principles and the stories offer a glimpse into the re-conceptualisation that this thesis wishes to engage in.

Philosophical texts

The third strand in this methodology that is unconventional is the use of and the positioning of the philosophical texts reviewed and used. Firstly although there is a review of apposite philosophical texts, which is a typical starting place for a philosophical thesis, this does not form the beginning of my argument. The philosophical review is placed later in the thesis, after Chapter 4 on conversations in order to elaborate and support the arguments of the conversationalists rather than as a foreground to my argument. I have given priority to the conversation chapter in order to show where the emphasis of this thesis lies: that is, with the practice of teaching, the teachers' voices on their philosophies of education and on their ideas as to what constitutes excellence. Hence philosophers are cited with reference to specific ideas, such as the concept of excellence translated from the Greek *arete*, and the authority of the state in educational matters, rather than as a review of any complete corpus of writings. All the conversations are concerned with the over-authoritarian approach taken by the state both in the UK and the USA, and reveal belief that this prevents rather than assists in giving a quality education. The stories present convincing evidence that it is better to rely on professional judgement than state mandates in order to achieve excellence. It is a continuing and constant feature of my methodology that ideas and

their influence within the practice of teaching is a priority to be considered before any theoretical stance is taken.

Ideas involved with the classical concept '*arete*', and ideas about state authority in education are the philosophical issues that the teachers raised in the conversations. They are relevant and important to the advancement of my argument. This philosophical investigation is subjected to critical examination through the personal perspectives revealed in conversations with my teaching colleagues. These conversations form the narratives that interrogate the philosophy and the philosophy in turn informs the analysis of the conversations. This is a methodology of theorising, reassessing through conversations and then retheorising. Following Griffiths (2000), I call this process 'practical philosophy'.

The writings of Plato, Locke, Rousseau, and Dewey are chosen because each attests to the idea of *arete*, even though all reflect differing views of the tension between the individual and the interventions by the state. I discuss *arete* as understood in classical times in Chapter 5, and I trace its relevance right through to Dewey and the voices of my teacher colleagues. The question of state authority is represented by a range of views from Plato for whom all authority for education resided in the state, to Rousseau who denied the state any right to authority. Plato's views were not challenged until such authority settled in the hands of the church. Locke in the 17th century is an example of early and influential thought on the tension between church /state authority and the importance of individual experience in learning and teaching. Rousseau developed his ideas about the centrality of the child 100 years later. This became the foundation of Dewey's *School and Society* (1899/1956) and *Experience and Education* (1938/1966). Neither Rousseau, nor Dewey would have agreed with all of Locke's proposals to tailor education according to social status. Rousseau, who retained a gender difference between Émile's and Sophie's education and thus continued the idea of education as social status, wanted to throw off all other constraints, not only the role of the church but that of parents and teachers as well. Dewey certainly had many ideas about what was

relevant to the lives of children, but not in a socially prescriptive sense as was Locke's thinking, nor were they based on Rousseau's romantic notion of children. His philosophy is practical but none the less inspiring. The importance of the experience both for the child and the teacher opens up an understanding of balance between authority and autonomy. These philosophers form a line of development in educational thinking that has clearly influenced present day educational ideals. I discuss these fully in Chapter 5.

Dialogues

The fourth strand of my methodology, which is unusual, is the use of imagined dialogues. There are dialogues used in philosophy, notably by Plato's but also Heidegger. However although I use dialogues in a similar fashion to these philosophers I use them for a different overt reason. I say overt because I do not know whether this use was also relevant to other writers of dialogues. There is no way that I could know. My use is to aid a self-study. They are an examination of where I stand on the issues raised in the arguments so far. They are an aid to me in developing further this research. I realised I would need a great deal of philosophical understanding before I could take any discussion about the concept of quality further. The concept of education itself, the aims and ideals, matters of practice and the morality of teachers all involve value laden judgements that teachers make and are making with or without conscious effort whilst they teach. In order for me to understand the importance of the teachers' contribution to my argument I needed to assess for myself where all these divergent ideas had led me and how they helped my understanding of the concept of quality. In writing the dialogues and in examining and reflecting upon my changed and changing learning I advance further the argument that philosophical conversation is the means of understanding the concept of quality and excellence in education.

As indicated in Chapter 1 there is a strong link between the processes of conversations and dialogues, but they each have distinct characteristics. Conversations are living

activities that are not pre-scripted or planned in the same way that dialogues are.

Conversations may well be subject to an agenda or a focus. They can be directed by a dominant member of the pair, or group. A conversation is an event that may be recorded and written about but it is distinctly different from a dialogue which is scripted, edited, changed and used for dramatic purposes as well as part of the story telling process. The elaboration of ideas in the imagined dialogues helped me to argue difficult issues in my self-study, and arrive at a clearer idea of what my thoughts were as I discovered how complicated the issues of educational quality were.

Dialogues are the form that Plato and other philosophers (Haight, 1980; Heidegger, 1996) used as a method of working out ideas in progress. The dialogues of Plato may be an edited form of a genuine conversation - we are not to know - but they are used as a methodological tool in order to explain an argument. Stephen Law (2005) exemplifies a modern day version of this method by putting up an idea or an hypothesis and then playing devil's advocate. It is an accepted form of philosophical discourse. In the process of my supervision this is the role that Professor Roy Corden, (one of my research supervisors at Nottingham Trent University) took with me when we were discussing ideas about education and teachers.

The imagined dialogues that I wrote as a means of analysing the conversations were a necessary exercise for me in that they were a means through which I could examine differing points of view in a dramatic style, and use the actual words and ideas of others, taken from conversations. This contributed to my development and became the basis of a self-study which I explain more fully in the next section of this chapter. It was because of the writing of the dialogues that I came to understand and manage the unending questions and the inevitability of unresolvedness that is part of the philosophic process. Up to this point I had imagined that I might be able to have something conclusive and definitive to say about the inappropriateness of the production/business model of quality in educational matters, or find more precise words in order to convey a different concept of quality education. I saw the problem in black and white. What the writing of the

dialogues brought about in me was the recognition that discussion is helpful in disentangling our thoughts and in tidying up our usage of words and concepts and in enabling me to realise the complexity of the endeavour. I saw many shades of grey between the black and the white of my original distrust. Not that the distrust was ill founded. It was not. There were no clear answers to many of my questions about education in general and quality in particular. In other words this self-study revealed something of the true nature of philosophy—and of the nature of quality. There was however, tremendous advance in understanding the possibilities of taking one interpretation and logically following it through. The clarity that some of the arguments threw up was helpful in both my own thinking and in my colleagues. The usefulness of finding no exact definitions did not dishearten but rather encouraged us. We saw the value of philosophical discourse in providing us with a deepening and salutary re-orienting of thought that led to more fruitful forms of action than we might otherwise have entertained.

Dialogues and self-study

The dialogues came about as a result of my own search for answers. Before I could go any further in my argument I had to discover what I really thought about issues that I realised were important in the conversations, since many of my expectations had been challenged. In the analysis of the conversations I categorise the metaphors and the stories used. Making these connections indicated the underlying philosophy of education and the answers to the big questions. Not surprisingly, the real basis of the teachers' beliefs about education greatly influenced these teachers' ideas of quality. My thinking had changed, so I had to do my own re-thinking first. This method of self-study is a particular activity of teacher educators which I describe more fully in the chapter on dialogues. At this stage it is enough to say that reflection is fundamental to any discussion centred on excellent teaching. *The Self - Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-Step)* (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBosky and Russell, 2004) advances action

and reflection as essential for teachers' development and for teacher educators' development.

It was in the attempt to clarify my own thinking that the importance of the stories my colleagues and I told came to the fore. Both conversation and dialogue, which I have briefly described in this chapter, are accepted parts of the philosophic tradition of inquiry and of the method named self-study. The paper that I wrote and presented at the Fourth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Practices in 2004, *Diverse Conversations on my Journey of Hope*, helped me to understand that through the process of dialogue one could refine and clarify ideas. These are not simply exemplifications of a concept, though they are that as well. They are the method by which we both communicate and clarify a difficult or abstract concept or idea. It is the method which teachers have used for centuries and it is more reliable than, if not preferable to definition or descriptions. It is something that we do quite unconsciously at times, but with the very definite idea that we can actually explain a concept by a story. The self-study by means of the dialogues added another kind of conversation to the methodology.

The overarching methodology

The overarching methodology is philosophical which in its usual format examines what certain important philosophers have written about pertinent ideas. I selected Socrates, Plato, Locke, Rousseau and Dewey whose importance to education is well documented (Carr, 2003; Hogan, 1995). The philosophical investigation is a methodology which uses the tools of thinking and reflecting in the company of other philosophers, through their texts. The methodology and the method are the same in philosophy. The methodology is the discipline you work within. In my case the discipline is philosophy as distinct from social science or literature for instance. The structures and the principles of each discipline will dictate what methods are viable and valuable. Each discipline uses appropriate tools to support the research. The appropriate tool for investigating the

meaning of a concept is philosophy. Methodology is also a branch of philosophy which is concerned with methods and procedures.

In educational research, according to Cohen and Manion (1994),

The aim of methodology is to help us to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific enquiry but the process itself. ... 'science' implies both normative and interpretive perspectives....we have in mind the systematic and scholarly application of the principles of a science of behaviour to the problems...of teaching and learning...and to the clarification of issues having direct or indirect bearing on these concepts. (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p 40).

The process in philosophy is the thinking and debating and the putting forward of different ideas or perspectives according to the principles of logical argument.

Cohen and Manion (1994), quote Kaplan (1973), on the aims of methodology,

To describe and analyse ... methods, throwing light on their limitations and resources, clarifying their presuppositions and consequences ... It is to venture generalisations from the success of particular techniques, suggesting new applications and to unfold the specific bearings of logical and metaphysical principles to concrete problems, suggesting new formulations. (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p 42).

Methods are the means you use in order to find out what you need to know. The method of conversing with a group of friends as in this thesis would not be valid for a social science methodology, chiefly because drawing on the voices of colleague practitioners might be open to debate as being neither an unbiased sample nor ethnography. In philosophy such a method is validated by philosophical writings from Plato in ancient times, to modern writers such as Haight, (1980), Galea (2002), Law (2003) and Midgley (2005). The concept of friends may also be open to debate, but I intend it to mean simply that all are people whose thoughts and opinions I value, and whose company I enjoy, both at work and outside school. Most of them I have known for a number of years. They were selected for this research only to the extent that they were invited and they accepted. No attempt is made to justify the number or the nature of teachers. I justify

working with colleagues and why their contribution is valid in Chapter 4. The methods selected must be fitting for the chosen methodology and they must enable appropriate exploration of that methodology. The techniques employed should enable you to carry out the method. The interview technique, for example: would enable you to gather information from a chosen sample, sampling being your method. This would be appropriate for an ethnographic methodology for instance. I claim that conversations, and reflections upon the words and meanings used in them, constitute an appropriate method for this philosophical investigation.

The traditional, modern investigation involves study of relevant literature and discussion either with oneself or others before opening up new perspectives or ideas on the concept, ideas or argument under review. This usually continues by proposing new perspectives, asking more questions and sometimes openly proposing a theory. The investigations of Plato in his dialogues exemplify exactly what I refer to and in part, what I do myself. His is the first text of the Western Philosophic canon and I return to that both as a starting place for my investigation and as an example of how to work through an argument. From his times in ancient Greece to the present day, philosophers question and examine ideas, concepts and arguments. They review ideas and theories of ideas that are ever present and never conclusively resolved, such as, 'What is the purpose of life? What is education? What is morality?' Each philosopher explains a new and/or different perspective on the questions and we advance in our understanding by broadening the scope and the depths of thinking. Philosophic discussion enables us to perceive the validity of certain views, and the consistency, the conformity and the inevitability of certain conclusions. By reflecting on many diverse theories we become more informed to judge for ourselves and make decisions knowing the full implications, both logical and philosophical of such judgements. Without philosophical doubting, reflecting, thinking and arguing, wisdom in all disciplines could not prosper. Philosophers also introduce new ideas and concepts (categorical imperatives, post-modern perspectives) and perpetually clarify issues and stimulate new thinking among students of philosophy.

The philosophical method of reading, thinking, acting upon that thinking and then reflecting again before action (all the while working with colleagues) is similar to the rationale of action research. Action research, which is reflective and dialectical, could possibly have been considered as a methodology as its aims are clearly similar to mine: those of bringing about change and ongoing change through the process of continuing involvement with a specific research project. However, this research is not to be validated by changes that could be measured. Any changes would be difficult to categorise and outcomes may not be realised until some unknown time in the future. This thesis is concerned with increasing understanding and wisdom through drawing on practice. My research question is primarily concerned with the philosophical issue of concept use and could not easily be subsumed under the heading 'project'. I am undertaking philosophy driven on action but it is not Action Research. It is philosophy *in* education, rather than *of* education and like Griffiths' work for social justice (1997), it draws on both philosophy and teaching.

Judgement on the quality of teaching and learning is to be made by the application of principles rather than by quantification. This is not a method that can be easily assessed, but a coherent account can be given. Indeed, I claim that the results of reflecting on practice are precisely what constitute quality on education. It is not difficult to account for the good judgement of teachers, but it is difficult to quantify it, checklist it or concisely define it. The examples of excellence the teachers give in their stories testify to the thoughtful approaches taken by teachers and learners. The finality of a single answer or perhaps a set of answers is often proffered in philosophic debate. I offer a theory based on principles as a means of understanding the concept of quality. Like scientific theories, such theories may stand as knowledge until they are displaced. This does not preclude the possibility of re-opening the debate, continuing the debate, or arguing for the redundancy of the answer(s). The purpose of philosophical discussion is not necessarily to find an answer, but there is always the hope of increasing one's wisdom and understanding. Such an outcome would bring about changes that are not necessarily predictable.

In the philosophical method there is much less empirical involvement, though perhaps more than many philosophers would have us think. Bridges (1997) argues for a much closer relationship between philosophy and empirical research showing how conceptual analysis has worth in its own right but is also a necessary foundation of much empirical educational research. I am not advocating a conceptual review *before* looking at practice, though I take what Bridges suggests as an alternative approach. My approach is rather one of doing some philosophy in terms of thinking and puzzling but I then turn to practising teachers to converse and discuss ideas before I set about conceptual analysis. This is more in the vein of Dewey's approach, in which philosophy is driven by action as described in the chapter on philosophy of education in *Democracy and Education*. (2004)

The educational point of view enables one to envisage the philosophic problems where they arise and thrive, where they are at home, and where acceptance or rejection makes a difference to practice, (Dewey, 1916/2004, p 361).

The process at the end of a philosophical investigation is often the proposal of a theory. Sometimes a theory is simply implicit in the work. The conclusion drawn from this investigation led to generalisations and thence to principles from which a theory could be proposed. Plato's theory of forms, (1959), Kant's categorical imperatives (1953) and Ryle's negation of dualism in *Concept of Mind* (1962) are examples of theory proposed through philosophical investigation. In this thesis the discussion of educational issues both explicit and implicit in the conversations led me to the generalisation of two moral principles which I found in all the stories: namely, to act with moral integrity and to be aware of unpredictable outcomes. From these principles that I explain more fully in the theory chapter I am able to clarify the meaning of the concept of quality in education and subsequently propose a theory.

Practical philosophy

I started this research with philosophical questions which I then subjected to critical examination through the personal perspectives revealed in the conversations. The conversations then required further philosophical investigation from which I proceed to analysis and theory. This follows the course that Griffiths (1997) describes as practical philosophy. She does not claim to be the first to use the phrase and cites Dunne (1993). The conversations form the narratives that will interrogate the philosophy and the philosophy will in turn inform the analysis of the narratives. This is a methodology of theorising, then reassessing through conversations, and then re-theorising. It is what Griffiths (2001) describes as practical philosophy. It is also philosophy which

...links with practical concerns.... using practice in shaping the explicit formulations of theories and then in turn using those explicit formulations to see what might best be done. (Griffiths, 2001 p 28).

It is a methodology of thinking and reflecting and then rubbing up against situated experience in order to re-think and reflect and refine ideas that energise the theoretical framework. It is an iterative process that I found in Brighouse (2000), Elliot (1987), and Galea's thesis (2002). Hogan writes of the benefits of interaction between philosophy and teaching practice.

If the taking up of *educational* perspective requires philosophy to accomplish a lateral shift of thought, and to carry out its appraisals of some major figures from a different standpoint, then this should be counted as an advance for educational thought and enrichment for philosophy." (Hogan, 1995, p 11).

Griffiths (2001) shows the relationship between philosophical considerations and practical elements in teaching from where the philosophical ideas were drawn. The importance is shown of returning to that same place for further discussion and sureness of fit. Practical philosophy is:

‘philosophy as, with and for...’ rather than ‘philosophy about or applied to...’ a kind of philosophy that acknowledges its own roots in the communities from which it sprang, and which then speaks with (at least) that community... It is not quite educational research and not quite philosophy either. (Griffiths, 2001, p 28).

On the divide between theory and practice, Tann and Griffiths (1992) elaborate:

Our argument is that we should value practitioners’ personal theories and encourage them to make explicit their tacit theory to help them theorise *from* their practice, at a number of different levels of reflection. Personal theories need to be revealed (at different levels) so that they can be scrutinised, challenged, compared to public theories, and then confirmed or reconstructed. ‘Personal’ and ‘public’ theories need to be viewed as living, intertwining tendrils of knowledge which grow from and feed into practice. (Tann and Griffiths. 1992, p 71).

This intertwining is exactly what the conversations revealed. And it was in the dialogues that I reconstructed for myself the public and the private theories.

Elliot (1987) adds that it is important that rational action be justified by rational thinking. Stating Hirst’s (1986) argument Elliot writes,

‘The function of a practical educational theory is to justify principles for the rational determination of educational practices. The function of purely theoretical knowledge is to explain phenomena. Educational theory aims to provide a basis for rational action rather than simply rational understanding.’ Nevertheless the practical principles it specifies must be justified in terms of rational understanding. (Elliot, 1987, p 149).

This idea is central to the arguments put forward by the teachers in conversation, who feel that they are required to carry out educational practices with which they, as professionals, do not agree. I argue that this is not a difference of opinion but a difference of philosophy. It raises questions about what teachers believe and what the so-called experts believe; about what teachers learn in their own education and about how they integrate their own beliefs into their teaching. The rational thinking that logically requires test results to be a determining factor in the success of education is

based on a perspective of education that presupposes that test results can measure and reveal success in education. Where is the rational understanding when one disagrees with this basic assumption? If educational theory is based on a false understanding of reality, actions arising from that theory will lead to conformity at the price of understanding. *The Robots*, a Mel Brooks film released in March 2005 deals with this problem. In an interview on March 10th 2005 on the Today Show, a TV chat show in the states, Brooks said the film portrays how conformity and productivity that are the driving forces of our lives today destroy our creativity. Strohmeyer says of the film:

Not far beneath its kid-friendly surface, *Robots* is a story of society gone awry. Corporate greed has overrun traditional values, and ordinary people find themselves faced with little choice but to continually upgrade themselves with the latest trends or fade into obscurity and obsolescence. Under the marketing slogan "Why be you when you can be new," the wicked powers of advertising are turning hopeful young folk into mindless consuming machines. It's a bleak picture, and it's all too pertinent to our current global predicament. (Strohmeyer, 2005)

It is all too pertinent to our current educational predicament too. If teachers are pressured into carrying out mandated educational practices so that they produce more efficient consumers (and contributors) for our society, they may become conformist. In doing so they may compromise their own sense of professional judgement. Such conformity does not always lead to good practice since the rational actions, so-called by the experts, are not supported by the rational thinking of the teachers. So instead of creating conditions conducive to education, where openness, flexibility and questioning have their proper place, some teachers find themselves unable to be creative and some lose their passion for teaching. According to the state, the practical principles specified are justified in terms of rational understanding. What effect does it have when the rational thinking of the state is not the same as that of the teachers? This is part of what I attempt to disentangle in the dialogues. I found that the beliefs and values of teachers differed from the beliefs and values of the system in which they worked as teachers. This proved to be both philosophically and educationally worth investigating.

[Educational] research...must enable questions, about the belief and value systems underlying educational practices to be answered. This means that research must be grounded in an awareness of the operational principles underlying actual educational practices and the contexts of belief and value in which they are embedded. (Elliot, 1987, p 156).

This research is theoretical, but it is grounded in the practices of the classroom. The conversations reveal the practices and the beliefs of the teacher.

I am making claims and being concerned about those same things that Simone Galea refers to in her successful PhD thesis (May 2002). She employed this methodology of theoretical research grounded in the practices revealed by her conversationalists. The use and analysis of taped conversations enabled her to become a co-learner with her participants. Her intention, like mine, was that the conversations should allow the researched and the researcher to engage in "a process of reflection and rethinking which includes attention to politically situated perspectives" (Griffiths, 1995). For Galea the women in her research were partly constructing their subjective selves through their conversations. The conversation and the women's analysis were an integral part of the process of Galea's research. Similarly I see the outcome of my research as being mutually educational. Both parties learn more about what we mean by education, what we think it is for. We learn from the use of language and its underlying messages and from each other's ideas on what constitutes a concept of quality and excellence in education. Our ideas on what education is for, on the tension between professional judgement and state mandates, whether schooling is best accomplished in smaller rather than larger establishments and many other important discussions come under scrutiny in the dialogues as do our ideas on the usefulness of the business model for education in general and for quality of education in particular. (In Chapter 3, I explain what the industrial, business or managerial model entails). These teachers are not speaking *for* teachers. They are speaking for themselves. Their individual responses are not going to be used to generalise about teachers but they are going to help me to understand how the business model or the managerial language has influenced education in general and these teachers in particular. It is my interpretation which will stand against the

philosophy that I have read and enable me to bring more experience than my own to the table of arguments. I am not a philosopher sitting alone working on abstract theory. I am firmly situated in the classrooms of our schools and I see the need to bring these two disciplines together.

What I am claiming, then, is not that I speak for others or that I represent them, but to be responsible for making my own claims. I endeavour to express what I understand as clearly as possible for myself. I make no claims about the views of others. The question of quality in education is sufficiently identifiable as a fundamental issue to be of concern to others and to be relevant to their work as teachers. Part of the aim of this research is to give voice to the participants in realising themselves as powerful voices about quality. At the same time I would expect that my voice is one that will contribute to the debate. The process of challenging one's ideas and reflecting upon those challenges and bringing about a different perspective through understanding is what teaching and learning are fundamentally concerned with. In order to do this I have drawn on the ideas of others, notably my colleagues.

In her thesis Galea puts conversations to a similar use. She uses the words and the conversations of the teachers with whom she is working, not just as a sounding board of how women feel about themselves, although it is exactly that as well, but also as a basis of her own interpretation through her study of Foucault and Irigaray. Galea explains how women manage in their lives as teachers, (some of them as mothers and others not), to rationalise and subvert the symbolism of the maternal. She uses the conversations as voices of practice in a philosophical thesis, giving the practical "how to" alongside the theoretical "how to think about how to". Not that there is any dichotomy proposed between practice and theory, though that is inherent at times in the definition of the terms. The conversations for Galea, as for my thesis, are the source of the practical knowledge that we share in as teachers. The conversations, as part of the philosophical investigation, expose our own perspective and the challenges to our perspective.

The relevance of this methodology

This methodology was selected because my research is a philosophical investigation into the use and meaning of the concept of quality in current educational literature and practice. Such an investigation entails both the public and the private. I examine the public requirements as set out by mandates and teachers' private responses especially regarding the compromises they feel.

How do the personal, individual, private aspects of a self interrelate with the political, collaborative, public struggle to establish social justice through education? (Griffiths, 1997, p 191).

Paraphrasing Griffiths cited above, my question is, how do the "personal, individual, private" ideas about what constitutes quality in education, "interrelate with the political, public struggle" to establish predetermined and attainable standards for all in education? This research is clearly asking the hard questions, trying to illuminate unseen areas, clarifying issues and philosophising, all of which are criteria for educational research according to the method put forward by Griffiths. I want to say that my research is philosophy *in* education rather than *of* education. (Griffiths, 1997).

Conversations and their analysis constitute a part of the philosophical investigation. They have always been considered a method in philosophy. There are many other roles for conversations and I draw attention to these differences in Chapter 4. The conversations in this research are considered to be the beginning with further face-to-face or e-mail follow up intended. These conversations are the practical part of philosophy, which informs the theoretical philosophy, which in turn interrogates the theory.

A real school isn't full of....persons living either private or public lives, it is full of people trying to negotiate the relationship between them where the two persistently overlap or intermesh. The distinction between the private person and

the public world that looked so sharp in abstract theory looks more blurred in actual practice. (Griffiths, 1997, p 195).

Theory

Most philosophical investigations lead to some form of theory. Theory may be proposed, and/or new questions raised. A philosophical discussion may well end with more questions than answers and usually opens up debate rather than close it down with resolutions. The nature of philosophy is not bound by definitions. It is neither easy nor straightforward to discuss the nature of philosophy. It is in using the tools of the discipline that you describe the discipline. It is applying your thinking to your thinking. It is like using a screwdriver to unscrew a screwdriver to find out how it unscrews. Just as we tend to categorise and generalise we also tend to theorise. By that I mean that we arrive at generalisations which we scrutinise and if they are workable we put them to use. For example as a teacher I read Piaget's work with children, I work with children in my classrooms and I reflect carefully about his theory. In rejecting some of it I propose my own and work accordingly. Teachers act on beliefs as if they were a coherent system supporting a theory. Only when we reflect and compare and discuss do we rethink and then reform our thinking, often finding that we hold inconsistent theories simultaneously. Theorising is an inherently human activity and one which comes under the general category of philosophy too.

Coming to certain conclusions after a discussion or debate on a written treatise or book is part of the process of research. Working with the methodology of practical philosophy I had expected to arrive at several ideas of how to find quality and what it might mean. It might have been in identifying needs, or foreseeing potential. It could have been several principles of good teaching all brought together at one opportune moment. I expected to have a varied and unregimented array of generalisations which could be used as possible markers for the identification of quality. Working through the analysis and the dialogues however brought me to a place where I was struck by the thought that forming another checklist would be seriously in error and, that by abstracting principles and

acknowledging the importance of stories I could devise a different perspective and a possible theory.

Generalisations and principles

Both 'generalisations' and 'principles' are words used in overlapping senses and I need to make clear how I intend to use them. Generalisations are just that and no more. They are the categorisations of many things that can be grouped together for any number of reasons. 'PhD students struggle with their research' is a valid generalisation because in my experience that is what I have found to be the case. There are many exceptions and any number of reasons that anyone could put forward to prove the contrary. There could exist side by side a generalisation that claims 'Ph.D. students find their studies enjoyable'. Both statements can be logically held as they are not inconsistent. Similarly there is no need to furnish identifiable proofs for the purposes of conversations. The conversations discussed in this thesis reflect a partnership of trust. We accept or disagree on points depending on the degree of evidence or proof given, but this is not sufficient for a thesis or for a theory.

Principles are abstracted from generalisations to be fundamental to any claim about what is necessary rather than what is possible. Generalisations are descriptive, whereas principles are prescriptive. To be aware of unpredictable outcomes is a principle abstracted from generalisations found in the stories where teachers exhibited in different ways their sensitivity to the particular child/children. One generalisation would be: excellent teachers do not expect the same outcome for all children from the same lesson. The abstracted principle, which is prescriptive not descriptive, is 'to be aware of unpredictable outcomes.' I discuss this more fully in Chapter 7. The process of generating generalisations from the conversations and from these generalisations discovering certain fundamental principles was effected through the process of self-study, which produced the writing of the dialogues. This method of working within philosophy is not unique (Brighouse, 2000; Elliott, 1987; Galea, 2002; Griffiths, 2001)

but the combination of self-study and practical philosophy within the framework of a philosophical investigation probably is.

In this chapter I have explained the overarching methodology chosen and the methods used and given reasons for these choices. I have indicated that a more detailed explanation will be given of the rationale of the conversations in Chapter 4 and of the philosophical texts in Chapter 5. The dialogues including self-study will be further explained in Chapter 6. The next chapter details not only the definitions and interventions proposed for quality education but also the literature that I consulted that endorsed and challenged my thinking on the concept of quality in education.

CHAPTER 3

DEFINING QUALITY: Interventions proposing quality

The purpose of this chapter is to review seminal, selected literature proposing definitions of quality and advocating quality control interventions. It is to be understood as a conversational debate about definitions and proposed interventions. The selected documents and books have influenced the development of the ideas which shaped this thesis. Because this is a philosophical investigation it is concerned with ideas drawn from the past and the present. The review is not chronological although it seeks to be logical in presenting the background of the development of the concept of quality in education as I, as a teacher, came to understand it. I refer to official educational documents, educational research literature and biographical literature of leaders in industry. Each section is intended to contribute to and provide helpful background on the on-going conversation about quality. The unconventional manner in which I have used official documents and texts is part of the overall methodology which I describe as a philosophical conversation.

I start in section 1 with an autobiographical response to the Command Paper *Teaching Quality* (1983) and its critique *The Quality Controllers* (Slater, 1985). This is where my concern with the meaning of quality began. Conversations at this time with teaching colleagues encouraged me in thinking there was something important being overlooked in the definition of quality advocated by this paper. I was concerned about the logical consequences of adopting such a stance and of adopting the proposed interventions. I became more sensitive to the underlying significance of the philosophy of education that was promoted with this new way of conceptualising quality. I claim it is the right place to begin my review since not only is this an important document as far as my personal

history and development is concerned, but it is also a seminal document in that it is the first to concern itself with quality control in education as we now understand that term. There were many other government publications and critiques in this period which I do not review as they are not germane to this thesis, and have since been superseded.

Section 2 of this chapter takes in my review of the work of Juran (1989, 2004) and Deming (1986) whose influence in quality control in manufacturing industries throughout the 20th century is, I believe, fundamental to the shift in the general and ordinary meaning of the word quality. It is part of a philosophical investigation to research the origins and development of concepts and concept use. It is necessary therefore to bring in literature from a biographical and research source from industry rather than educational research at this stage, in order to clarify the significance and the effectiveness of the industrial procedures that have influenced the subsequent meaning and use of the concept quality. Among many other essential definitions I look at the those of quality control, the primacy of customers and the notion of fitness for purpose.

In section three I bring these same definitions and themes from the industrial background and review them in educational research literature of the 1990s. The conversation continues in this section between the new technical definition of quality and the adoption or rejection of the innovative practices of the teachers. It does not claim to be a comprehensive review of research literature; rather it is selected on the basis of the definitions and themes which were identifiable as directly taken from the industrial model.

I return in section 4 to an official document, *Excellence and Enjoyment: A Strategy for Primary Schools* (2003) and look at current ideas and inferred definitions about quality in education. Policy documents are significant in the teachers' conversations, which are the subject of Chapter 4. I argue that my review takes note of their concerns and consequently includes two documents of significance: *Teaching Quality* (1983) which started the conversation and *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003) which we are currently

discussing. The review is thus an autobiographical narrative of my development in thinking through this research. More than this, however, it also provides an appropriate background to a philosophical conversation with teachers on excellence in education. Throughout this chapter I point forward to Chapter 4, by quoting my teacher colleagues where we have discussed the same issues and where their comments are relevant.

Section 1: Teaching Quality and the Quality Controllers

In this section I review the Command Paper, *Teaching Quality* (1983) and a critique of this document, *The Quality Controllers*, edited by Slater (1985) with contributions by Margaret Meek and Patricia and John White. The brief document is called a White Paper because it is a policy document. (The Green Papers are also Command Papers but they are consultation documents.) This document and the equally brief little book set the stage for the debate about quality in education. I have used my own headings to signal the areas in both the document and the critique that I consider important to my argument. These headings are: control, qualifications, qualities and skills.

Control

The 1983 White Paper *Teaching Quality* reads innocently enough. It is, as Slater states in the preface to *The Quality Controllers* (1985, p 7), “A laudable concern which we could all share at a high level of generality.” Look further into the text of the paper and we get glimpses of what we now know, 20 years later, to be the underlying philosophy of education giving the government more and more control.

In the Introduction to the White Paper the clear tone is set.

The government’s aim is to make the best use of available resources to maintain and improve standards in education. In the schools the teacher force, some 440,000 strong in England and Wales, is the major single determinant of the

quality of education. The supply, initial training, appointment and subsequent career development and deployment of schoolteachers are of vital concern to the government and to the nation. (1983, p 1)

The second section of the paper deals with the supply and demand of teachers and the third with teachers and qualifications. Section four raises issues within initial teacher training, while section five gives us the Government's proposals and the last section outlines the responsibilities of the Local Education Authority (LEA).

The style and language is economic and concerned with economies. It is more a paper addressed to what we now call human resource managers than teachers of young children. But it set out what the government was hoping to achieve: raising of standards, and improving the quality of teaching by improving the qualifications and the match between teacher and subject. The entire document is curriculum centred and begins the plethora of documentation that ensued over the curriculum, its 'delivery' and the inspections that would monitor the implementation of the new strategies. It has a briskness that Meek (1985) notes in the military metaphors and she suggests that these imply the 'unnamed people' who wrote the document were more used to writing for military or police organisations than other readers. It does not show any appreciation of the relationship between teacher and pupil other than a subject based one; teaching is not seen as involving an important interaction between teacher and learner. The whole tenor of the paper is of resources being used properly and carefully so as to save the taxpayers money.

The dominant issue of the document is control. There is little room for misunderstanding as the government intends to take control of the quality of education by improving teacher education and making the appropriate match between teacher and subject taught. This notion of quality control I examine in greater detail in the next section of this chapter. But it is already clear that a technical application of quality has made inroads into educational language in this Paper. Slater (1985) writes about the

limitations of the quality control concept and quotes William Taylor's account from *Metaphors of Education* (1984):

...an interpretation of quality control drawn from industrial practice...is of very limited application to the determination of quality in non-marketed goods such as 'education'. There are problems in defining quality. The use of the word 'control' implies a pattern of relationships that bears little relationship to the human reality of institutional and systems management. (Taylor, 1984, pp14-15).

It is quite common, 20 years on, to read of education being a marketable product and of quality control in human management as well as industrial processes, but that points to how far we have incorporated the language of industrial practices. It may or may not indicate an acceptance that education is such a commodity. Hopefully, the argument still goes on. There is as much critique today of the mechanistic approach to education as the small volume, *The Quality Controllers*, contained immediately after the publication of the White Paper in 1983. (Apple, 1996; Ball, 2003; Midgely, 2005; Mortimore, 1997; Nuttall, 1995)

Meek (1985) argues that the words and implications of the paper lead us to believe that central government is about to take over - as indeed we now know it has. She already sees a link between control of teachers and their qualifications and control of the curriculum which was beginning at this time. (For example, the HMSO publication from the DES in 1984, *English from 5-16: Curriculum Matters 1*.) Control is a central theme of *Teaching Quality* which is the first of a series of documents that gave voice to the authoritarian stand that was to follow. The writings of the 1990s that I include later in this chapter begin to reveal the division of beliefs about what was paramount in education: the role of the state in education in schools, or the role of teacher's professional judgement in carrying out the duties undertaken in state schools. *Teaching Quality* lacks any sense of teachers as people who interact with children; there is a "failure to convey anything essentially human about the teaching and learning situation." (Meek, 1985, p 25). This coldness is what furthers the impression of a production

approach to the teaching profession. Meek's final paragraph is a plea to treat teachers with respect. She feels they have been ignored and devalued by the government's intention to make savings at their expense. The truth of this is revealed in my conversations in Chapter 4. Meek rightly voiced this concern: "We should be wary of what precedents these decisions have established." (Meek, 1985, p 23) The work of the General Teaching Council is part of the continuing effort of those who believe in the importance and value of professional judgement.

Quality is largely defined by a number of control mechanisms, a form of definition which gives more evidence of a 'production' view of teachers and education. Mechanisms lead me to think of mechanical procedures used in industry. The contributors to *The Quality Controllers* argued against the proposals for quality control, not so much because of the suggestions made but of the tone and use of language and the implied concepts both of education and quality in education. They perceive the undermining of the intrinsic value of education by the economic necessities as perceived by the government. Patricia and John White (1985) pointedly put the question

If teaching Quality goes only for efficiency what is there to differentiate it from the educational Diktats of any authoritarian regime you care to mention? (White, 1985, p 40).

Qualifications

Section three of the White Paper states that teachers should be qualified in the subjects that they teach. The fact that they are not so qualified in many cases is cause for concern. But there is an insistence on this match to the exclusion of other aspects of teaching and other aspects of quality. To make the qualification match the only measure of quality does not take into account other important aspects of teaching. Slater (1985, p 15) thinks the emphasis on knowledge is oversimplified if other factors more difficult to describe or attend to are ignored:

Of course teachers must know their subject, but a concept of teaching which included knowledge of the subject as the only significant variable is skating on thin ice. (Slater, 1985, p 16).

Slater thinks it reduces the relationship to 'a cog in the wheel' idea and reinforces her strong arguments that the entire document has an underlying mechanistic approach to solving the problems of quality. It is not surprising to read that she asks for 'professional' status for teachers who are not treated as such in this paper, nor is it surprising to see her demand that the word 'education' be substituted for 'training' in the description 'teacher training'. Her view is clearly that

Such strictly economic and managerial concepts must not be allowed to crowd out a professional view of teacher education and training. (Slater, 1985, p 19).

Teachers are still asking for such consideration. Their professional judgements count for less now, and we still use the term 'teacher training' in England. The final paragraph in Slater's chapter gave me such hope when I read it in the year of its publication. It remains for me a landmark statement for understanding quality in a much broader manner. Slater encapsulates my deepest concern when she argues against the over-emphasis on subject knowledge:

... (when) quality becomes narrowly circumscribed with a focus on the instrumental ends of education to the falling away of the intrinsic, then the very concept of quality becomes unbalanced. (Slater, 1985, p 11).

Qualities and skills

Teaching Quality I claim, rarely touches on the characteristics of a good teacher, but does include this reference:

...personality, character and commitment are as important as the specific knowledge and skills that are used in the day-to-day tasks of teaching. (1983, p 8)

Though they are 'as important' there is little further added about them. The later reference to another HMSO document, *Ten Good Schools* (1977) is quoted: "the personal qualities of the teachers were in many cases the decisive factor in their effectiveness." (1977, p 8).

But *Teaching Quality* (1983) does nothing to help us discover what those qualities might be or how they might be attained. And yet we are to understand that they are 'decisive'. If this White Paper does suggest ways of being more effective, they are definitely through subject qualification and further training. There is little reference to teachers as professionals having a worthy input, but a great deal about the government controlling the training process, and the deployment of teachers in the work force. There is however a very simple economic mistake made when the document proclaims,

Training institutions and the employers are now able to recruit more young people with good qualifications and a strong aptitude for teaching. (1983, p 1).

Universities have to take what candidates offer themselves because of the simple need for numbers of teachers to fulfil the government's obligations to staff state schools. Because teachers' pay and conditions are relatively poor, these are not always people with high qualifications (Slater, 1984). The problem remains much the same today. Improving the quality of teachers is not aided by exhortations to select only those who have the right qualities. It is a much broader issue than that. This is simply not recognised in this paper. I would like to point forward to three conversations which will be discussed in Chapter 4. These address this particular problem in 2002 or 2003. This realistic view about recruitment remains a major concern in the conversations with Bonny Cain, a school superintendent in Texas, USA, John Tomlinson, Professor of Education at Warwick University, and Joanne Juren, a former principal of a high school in Texas.

Bonny: There is also a real teacher shortage. Now if we take care of problem number one of adequately funding schools, then they could adequately pay people and get the teachers. ...who give that commitment to kids, that it's not just a job, that it's truly their work. If you don't have the right teachers with the right kids you just don't get to accomplish anything that you need to accomplish or that you dream of being accomplished with kids.

John: People respect leadership which leaves them to feel more able to do it themselves. And really to know that. But actually doing that when you are faced with teachers who are really a bit inadequate, stupid or lazy it is very difficult. There is no doubt about that. But you have got to keep working with the material you've got. Think of it in terms of what is prudent and even of redemption. If you give up on that idea you really shouldn't be in education.

Joanne Juren: Unfortunately we have lowered the quality not only of our schools but also of the educators themselves. Most of the teachers today are from the lowest quarter of the graduating classes. Because we don't require high standards, and there are a myriad of reasons why we don't, like poor pay for one, we are not bringing in high quality people. It is a vicious cycle. Pay, working conditions, class size all contribute to why we don't get the really strong people and why we don't get to solve a lot of the problems.

The further argument in the 1983 White Paper, that universities are supposed to be able to select those who will be good teachers before they have started, is not aided by having specialist teacher education with no other possible outcome than to go into teaching as was the case in 1983.

The *education* of teachers, in a fuller sense of that word than the notion of 'training' contains, would enhance their quality and the quality of the process in which they are engaged. (Slater, 1985, p 18).

She claims that the whole tone of the document is managerial and the concepts discussed are managerial concepts. Her suggestion that the document should have been titled *Managing Teaching* is apt. It is about managing resources and thinking of "teaching and teachers as products and fails to be sensitive to teaching as a process and to teachers engaged in a process." (Slater, 1985, p 12).

I think *Teaching Quality* (1983) does succeed as a document about management of resources and as such it is not overly problematic but it does not address issues of quality teaching and thus the intention and the title of the document is suspect. My belief is that here we have indication of the slipperiness in language that accepts the idea of quality as excellence and at the same time is already accepting that quality is necessarily connected with controls and predetermined standards. *The Quality Controllers* (1985), on the other hand, indicates that critics have seen the problem. It is salutary to compare the critique by Hall (2005) of the more recent document, *Excellence and Enjoyment*, (2003) where she writes about the same issues in *Creative Tension? Creativity and basic skills in recent educational policy* (2005). I discuss these last two documents in section 4 of this chapter.

The many criticisms the contributors made in *The Quality Controllers* articulated what deeply concerned me on reading the White Paper in the 1980s and remain what deeply concerns me still. I am now concerned not only with the balance that has not been redressed over the intervening years, but also with the degree to which the government has taken control of education in our schools to the point of de-skilling teachers whose professional judgement is under-valued. The concept of quality has been reduced to fit a mechanistic model more precisely. Most of the fears of the writers in *The Quality Controllers* (1985) have been realised.

I turn now to the study I undertook in order to understand where the technical term quality control (and later, quality assurance) came from. The headings in this section indicate the areas which are relevant to my argument: Definitions, Quality Control, Systems, Total Quality Management, and Moving on to Excellence. Each section is a discussion, as in a conversation, of the technical meaning and how this is/is not applicable in education.

Section two: The business model

This section reviews some definitions and my understanding of their influence in the quality revolution in industry. It is in part a response to my question after reading *Teaching Quality* (1983): Where did this notion of quality control come from? As I review the literature from industry I raise further questions, as in a conversation, about the usefulness of a technical concept of quality. These questions are taken up in section three, where I review some of the innovative 'quality' practices undertaken by teachers inspired by their success in industries.

I have selected those authors who are seminal to the movement and relevant to my enquiry, a choice which includes Juran (1951, 1970, 1989, 2004), and Deming (1986, 1988), who gave the first influential definitions of quality in manufacturing industries, Garvin (1988) and Crosby (1979) on managing for quality and Cortada (1993) and Creech (1994) who wrote about total quality management (TQM). At the end of this section I review Peters' influential book *In Search of Excellence* (1982), which broadens the spheres of quality control into every aspect of management including the academic world in the 1980s and beyond. Every book that I consulted on quality referred to Juran and most (Cortada, 1993; Creech, 1994; Crosby, 1979, Walton, 1992) cited Deming. The blurb on the cover of Juran's autobiography, *Architect of Quality* (2004) reads:

His work is the foundation for much of the quality movement of the twentieth and twenty first centuries-everything from Total Quality Management to Six Sigma. The teaching and writing of Dr. Juran have had a profound impact on the products we use every day, and his books are considered fundamental references by quality professionals.

Definitions

My ideas about the concept of quality were philosophical and debatable, but when I looked into the literature on quality I found it to be mostly concerned with definitions related to manufacturing and management processes. From this literature I learned that quality is defined as inspection but also as quality control (Deming 1986; Ishikawa, 1993). Quality is defined in terms of customers and their requirements; the customer is the most important part of quality (Cortada, 1993; Deming 1986). Fitness for purpose is Juran's definition (1951), while for Crosby it is (1979) 'zero defects, do it right first time.' Fiegenbaum (1956) claims quality is what the buyer says it is and for Ishikawa (1985) quality is conformance to requirements. Cortada (1993) gives this definition:

I define quality as conformance to requirements. Period. We should perform the job or produce the product as we agreed to do it. (Cortada, 1993, p 7).

These definitions gave me cause for concern. The last one immediately raises important distinctions in my thesis. Transposed into education language it would read, "We should teach as we agreed to teach." It follows then that I agreed to be the best that I could be and remain idealistic and do the best for each child, but if by conforming to requirements and following government authority, I do not believe that I am doing the best for each child, which should I choose? It is a moral issue rather than a production issue. Sometimes fulfilling one part of this definition would be to deny the other and this tension presents itself very forcibly in the conversations in Chapter 4. Definitions are not a problem in the manufacturing or business world; they are appropriate. It is a problem in education and this is why these technical definitions of quality are mostly inappropriate.

In order to understand how a technical concept has become accepted in everyday language I needed to understand what exactly was meant by it, how it was used and

where this concept had relevance, if any, in education. Quality and quality control become interchangeable in much of the literature, and then quality assurance adds another dimension. According to the Institute of Quality Assurance, quality assurance means promoting excellence at all levels of process and management. The concept of quality is accepted as a technical concept having its own theory and a huge literature base, and is a university discipline. This is not the concept I intend when I write about quality education. I could not understand how education came to be employing these technical ideas; I could not empathise with any of them. Nothing sounded like the quality or the excellence I aspired to in my teaching. Yet these words and ideas were clearly present in the educational literature that I discuss in Section 3 of this chapter.

All the authors invoke the concept of quality and each gives very precise definitions. The concise way the subject is treated is particularly clear in Juran (2004). Like Deming, he came into the manufacturing world at the beginning of the 20th century, and both men showed brilliance throughout their lives in solving organisational problems initially on the factory floor and eventually in every sphere of business life including management. The idea of quality to engineers in industrial settings meant just one thing: 'inspection quality'. Products were to be inspected after they were produced to judge if they were of an acceptable standard. Quality soon changed from inspection of the finished product to an ongoing process during manufacture. Although the word inspection has been replaced by quality control in many manufacturing plants, inspection is still a working concept in schools. This is one area where education has failed to implement quality procedures in line with industry.

Deming (1986) and Garvin (1988) give some thought to the difficulty of using the word and concept of quality as used in everyday language, but they both dismiss this discussion in a paragraph and proceed to the real business of how to define it in industry. Deming is more concerned with getting measurements than discussing meanings. For him,

[quality is the ability] to translate future needs of the user into measurable characteristics, so that a product can be designed and turned out to give satisfaction at a price that the user will pay. (Deming, 1986, p 169).

This desire for measurements is certainly inherent in the government's meaning of quality. For Garvin the concept is more complicated and he struggles with the notion of individual value judgements, which he claims are only relevant in an industrial setting in terms of cost. Bowbrick (1992) elaborates that there is an illogical move from characteristics to attributes in this particular argument, concerning measurements and value judgements. Judgement of recognisable characteristics such as colour, Bowbrick argues, is still subject to perspectives. In Bowbrick's field of agricultural economics, he argues that when all characteristics are satisfied (for example, the size, shape, colour and weight of an apple) then taste, which is perhaps the most important characteristic, is a matter of individual taste quite literally. I consider this an important departure in the quality movement as it marks the difference between measurements and judgements of characteristics. I argue that value judgements are a necessary part of the concept of quality in education and are not answered in terms of costs. Garvin gets round this difficulty by redefining quality in terms of cost. According to Garvin (1988) the concept of quality is overly concerned with statistical controls and the internal specifications and adherence to them. He therefore advocates reducing the defectiveness of products, since defects cost money, by various pre-determined approaches which save enormous amounts in terms of production costs.

Value-based definitions take us a step further. They actually define quality in terms of costs and prices. Thus, a quality product is one that provides performance or conformance at an acceptable price or cost. (Garvin, 1988, p 41).

He has now redefined quality in terms of something else. In so doing he has shown the slipperiness of the concept, even in business language. Using the example of a running shoe costing \$500, Garvin claims that it is not a quality product because it is too expensive. This is "affordable excellence" and lacks "well-defined limits and is highly subjective." Garvin (1988, p16). What is to the point with this example is that

exceeding the expectations, going above and beyond what is required is not good quality; additionally the show does not represent good quality because it costs too much. This is not an appropriate application of the concept of quality in education.

It is a mark of the overpowering focus of the life of Juran that never once in his autobiography *Architect of Quality* (2004) does he mention quality other than as an adjunct of a product. His own definition, given in the preface, is simply stated:

“Quality” is an essential property of products (goods and services). (Juran, 2004, p I).

The fact that he puts quality in inverted commas may mean that he feels he is using it in a special way but in the book this quotation is the only occasion on which he does this. Throughout this book and other writings such as *Quality Control Handbook* (1951), *Quality Planning and Analysis* (1970), it is clear that quality is not a slippery concept for Juran at all. He uses the word both in its technical sense of high quality products which “meet customer needs, do not fail during use, and pose no threat to human well-being” (p ix) and in the general sense of ‘a quality telephone service’ (p100) by which he means not only reliable but clearly something above the usual. I am sure that he would argue that to be above the usual would only mean that it met its specifications whereas others did not. But I point to this word usage because it is indicative of the gradual change in the language of quality that I argue has occurred. Juran’s readers are expected to understand that when he writes ‘this quality service’ which he attributes to the telephone company, AT&T, and when he describes Western Electric as the ‘guardian of quality’ (p75), he is writing about some degree of excellence rather than what is accepted as standard. But because he is totally immersed in the manufacturing world his focus is products and services and these fit his definition of quality precisely. There is no slipperiness once we get into his working life; quality is about the pre-determined standards required for products.

Standard, meaning satisfactory, and excellence are words used in Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) reports and apply to lessons, teachers and budgets. These words have the same meaning as used by Juran and others because there are pre-determined criteria against which such standards can be judged. In education the standards are not as clear-cut as they are in any manufacturing plant. In education these matters are always open for discussion. Even if it is argued that they mean that the education provided is satisfactory (according to the criteria neatly listed) or that money is budgeted well, the notions are open to argument or debatable with almost every word used. These phrases used in the factory setting are unequivocal. These same words used in Juran's writings have a well-defined use. When he is touted on the book blurb as being the 'father of the worldwide quality revolution' they are correct in more ways than they imply. The revolution in industry is clearly charted and acknowledged, but the revolution in the meaning of the concept of quality is not even hinted at. I argue in Chapter 4, where I discuss metaphors, that this revolution in quality control has had a tremendous impact on how we talk about education and how our present government has attempted to persuade teachers that schooling is a business, and that our policies and procedures both in the classroom and the administration are matters for quality control.

It is worthwhile to look further into some of the developments of the quality movement as the concepts and words used underpin much of what I later refer to as industrial, business or managerial models. Concepts like control and assurance when used in conjunction with quality become highly specific. The more I understood how these terms came to be coined and used, the better I could argue for their in/appropriateness when applied to education.

Quality Control

The invention of the statistical control chart is worth commenting on because I believe this is the foundation of the quality movement's success and it is this which plays an important role in the assessment of quality in education. The job of inspection was

completely changed with the introduction of both Juran's and later Deming's understanding of statistical control on product quality (Walton, 1998). It was Shewhart's *Economic Quality of Manufactured Product* (1931) that explained the statistical control chart and gave the industry its first scientific tool for monitoring and evaluation. Shewhart and a group including Juran and Deming were largely responsible for creating the present day discipline of statistical quality control (Juran, 2004, p 6). Sampling was advanced by statistical methods also. Neither of these extraordinary tools was put to great use until after the Second World War. Juran (1951) explains that the statistical control chart gave managers a reason to invest in the *process* rather than the end of line inspection. According to Garvin, the improvement costs justified it (1988 p 254). Feigenbaum (1956) claims that Shewhart had developed this statistical technique by defining the limits of random variation in any aspect of a worker's task, setting acceptable highs and lows, so that any points outside those limits could be detected and the causes studied (cited in Walton, 1988, p 7).

Using mathematical tools and constructing a statistical chart could achieve the standard necessary within the prescribed tolerances with greater accuracy than was possible using physical inspection at the end of the process. The operators of the machines could themselves be trained to use the charts so that a separate inspection department was not necessary. This ability to use past experience in order to predict the limits of variability that was acceptable in manufacturing is applied in education to arrive at acceptable achievements standards for the SATs. We expect children to fall within certain bands of achievement and if they do, they pass; if not, they don't. The in-building of quality techniques in order to address the reasons for failure (in industry training the workers, looking at the quality of the raw material and looking at the viability of the process) can be aligned with education if there is agreement with the view of education that we should all come up to a certain standard and be able to produce evidence that we have. This process of using mathematical tools and in so doing using only those characteristics that can be measured is part of the quality control that we see in education now. However the move towards giving more emphasis to the self evaluation of schools

seems also to be in line with the thinking of putting at least some of the control back into the hands of those involved in the process.

In the 1920s Juran was already writing about quality control, but it did not 'catch on' quickly as there are many ramifications in introducing such a radical departure from the usual way of doing things. It affected all the processes involved in running a business, including the people and it meant a revolution in terms of management. His work in streamlining and rendering more efficient the systems of management, especially during the war years, reduced his staff from 65 to 35 (Juran, 2004, p 176) but there was no loss of jobs as personnel were needed in other understaffed areas and none lost a grade. Indeed, many improved their grades of pay. So successful was this style that it was recommended throughout the department by the 'Budget Bureau, the government's management watchdog' (Juran, 2004, p 177). Again the DES could have learned from these techniques in the redeployment necessary discussed in the 1983 document, *Teaching Quality*. The teaching situation in the 1980s was perhaps looked at as a war zone with the need to re deploy staff and become more 'productive' and effective. Juran's work must have had some appeal. The subsequent endorsement of checklists, dramatic charts and such like are all part of the effectiveness push that were used to convince teachers that there are more productive ways to get results.

Quality control came to mean controlling the entire process of production. The operators of the machinery were trained to use the charts and thereby became involved in the process of maintaining or ensuring the quality of the products. This involvement of workers was a major step in breaking down the traditional divide between managements and workers. It took almost fifty years for this message to get through in America whereas Japan seized upon these ideas and made them work very successfully. We see the reverse of this process in education in the 1990s where head teachers and teachers in England and Wales who were formally in control of the professional decisions of curriculum and style of teaching became centrally controlled by government. Training our new teachers in using strategies should not be equivalent to training operators on a

production line. The government has taken control of the entire process, but it has not empowered the 'workers' in the process. It has diminished the power of the teachers, creating rather than dissolving a divide between teachers and government.

Quality control also means, as both Juran and Deming demonstrated, improving the processes involved, and saving on costs by getting standards worked out before the process and setting up measures (in both sense of that word) to ensure that there was as little wastage of raw materials, labour and time as possible. All these endeavours were to make more profit. Quality control was expensive to set up but it is argued that,

What costs money are the unquality things – all the actions that involve not doing the job right the first time. (Crosby, 1980, p 47).

Again there are parallels in setting up SATs and grading them, though getting better results rather than profit is the aim.

Customers

In industry quality control means getting the standards right and getting what the customer wants. The results may not be the very best that you can produce because that may be too expensive, but such quality control does mean getting the customer what he wants. The customer is king. The customer is the dictator, the customer is the one paying, and the producers are the servants of the customer. It is all to do with customers. Customers are people who want things that other people make for them. To a managing director, a sales manager, a shop floor worker, quality may well add up to the same thing. The standard that is set or that you work to may be the best that you can do, the best that you can achieve and so the attachment of the qualifier quality to the product means both that it is made to strict specification and that it is the best possible in this limited sense. But this definition of quality will not work in the world of education. The idea that education is a product is problematic, to extend the metaphor and imply limitations to excellence in education is contradictory.

The government may well set standards of achievement and follow this up with inspections and testing of pupils in order to make evaluations of the outcomes and the effectiveness of the procedures followed. But there is room for debate and much discussion on these issues because no one, no customer, no producer or manager has that same role in education. There is no argument that I have found that convinces me that the parents or the pupils or the governors or all three or any combination form anything that resembles customers in the business world. In the next section of this chapter there is support for the idea of sixth form students as customers (Whatmough, 1994). Did A. S. Neill (1960) run Summerhill believing the children were customers? He allowed them to learn what they wanted when they wanted. The inspectorate did not rate his school as satisfactory (Ofsted reports online: failed four inspections in last 10 years, June 2007). The children who failed the 11+ were not customers in any sense of the word. Did Deakin (1973) treat his children as customers by schooling them at home? There is plenty of argument and debate about these issues. They are not resolved by redefining concepts in order to fit the prevailing ideology.

The shift in industry from 'what we can produce' to 'what the customer wants' is reflected in the present government's attempt to redress educational failings, as perceived by employers and parents who are seen as customers. The logical consequence is that we need to give these 'customers' the kind of education (in their children or prospective employees) that they demand. It is interesting that in discussing customers, Garvin elaborates on the differences between what customers want, what they should want and how they change as competitive products come on the market, as well as how they view products that last a lifetime. Juran (2004) tells of how he tried unsuccessfully to persuade customers of the improvements of a pneumatic tyre. No customer wanted them initially. Bowbrick (1992) examines these aspects of what the customer wants and thinks he wants, and argues not only that we need to be aware of these differences but that all the variables make talking about 'a quality product' more difficult. In education

all of the variables, what 'customers' want, should want and how these wants change, are considered part of the on going philosophical and educational debate.

Systems

As Deming insisted in *Out of the Crisis* (1986), if quality were not adopted into the entire company and made part of the way the company operated in all its systems, then one would not get the results that he so adamantly argued were possible and indeed, proved by the successes achieved by the companies using his methods. One of the important links in what he calls the chain reaction is cost cutting, because this leads to improved productivity. I can immediately see the appeal of closing some schools that are not economically viable so that other schools will increase their number on roll and require more teachers. Similarly those schools that do not perform well on the 'league tables' will decrease in popularity and another will benefit. He calls this capturing the market with better quality. (I will argue further about size of school in Chapter 6.) However, both Deming and Juran claim that if your business is in financial trouble the last thing you should do to cut costs is create redundancies in the work force. You stay in business, and management must take the cut. In Japan they did this twice over in many companies and survived and succeeded. You keep the product going and improve the system so it will retain its market share. There is much emphasis on the system being at fault rather than the workers. This would surely have been a more encouraging attitude to take about the perceived failure of our education system in the 1980s. The evidence from teachers in my conversations suggests that throughout the implementation of the new strategies teachers have constantly felt under pressure and undervalued. I point forward here to the conversations used in the dialogues in Chapter 6, concerning the concept of time.

This understanding of how the work force contributes to the end product and how management needs to perceive the value of that force to ensure a successful outcome is the sort of understanding that seemed to be lacking in the re-deployment or the

deployment of teachers. The parallels are tenuous, but the idea that teamwork is what is necessary especially in a crisis is not new. The idea was revolutionary in manufacturing plants and certainly in education in the 1980s in England and Wales, where the entire system was reviewed starting with Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College in 1976. Lessons taken from business world successes are sometimes glaringly obvious and sometimes glaringly invisible. In this case, for instance, the overhaul of the system was undertaken with great thoroughness but the importance of teamwork was overshadowed by the importance given to curriculum input and curriculum match, rather than the whole school and the LEAs working as a team together. The top-down approach to new measures is still a major concern.

Quality systems are not systems of the best or highest achieved of its kind. Quality systems are about managing in order to obtain the required standard. 'To manage quality' has two meanings: 'how to organise for it to happen' as a manager organises the processes that produce an item of the right standard, and 'how to get to achieve it', as in how can you arrive at quality. There are two meanings to the words 'a quality manager'. One means someone who is in charge of the inspection processes and another means a person who is of the highest standard. These are by no means identical. The same applies to the words 'quality assurance'. Does this mean we are assured that we will get the highest what ever it is, or that the assurance is in conformance with requirements? (And that is not necessarily the highest possible.) The word attaches in different ways. This is not an attempt to understand the linguistics involved but to point out the obvious that has become misleading. Quality control does not mean a control that is of the highest quality, it means control of the standards set, but it retains its connotations of the highest or best. Granted we are attempting to achieve the best possible or the highest quality in both senses of the word, but they are not the same and such slipperiness leads to more confusion rather than clarification. Quality systems are the means of getting quality every time. Juran (2004) calls it the science of quality management. The underlying principle of this total quality view

...is that, to provide genuine effectiveness, control must start with the design of the product and end only when the product has been placed in the hands of a customer who remains satisfied... the first principle to recognise is that quality is everybody's job. (Juran, 2004, p 13).

Examples are quoted where everyone had the motivation to pull together and the results were near perfection. The real eye opener was not that 'zero defects' is possible, but that the changed attitude is what created the success. Juran realised that management needed to be involved to get this kind of attitude which in turn created success. It was not only the concept of teamwork that mattered, but also the focus on end results. Inspired leadership in education has just the same effect. In industry, however, 'acceptable' was good enough for the customer (what the customer wants), therefore to go beyond the specified limits was a waste of time and energy. This idea is particularly difficult to accept in education, but is a necessary consequence of equating education with product and students as customers. Where we intend instruction, for instance, it has some applicability. Neither instructor nor pupil want to know more than is necessary to get the qualification for what ever purpose it is intended. An educational view I claim, would not countenance such an argument.

Total Quality Management

One of the most successful systems was Total Quality Management, (TQM) (Cortada 1993; Creech 1994; Garvin, 1988) Total quality performance means understanding who the *customer* is, what the requirements are, and meeting those requirements *without error, on time, every time*. (The italics are mine.) Fiegenbaum (1931) introduced the concept and Cortada (1988) redefines it as:

...a continuous improvement [in] methods across the entire enterprise. Not only in manufacturing but all departments...the people who make us successful are our customers. (Cortada, 1988, p xii).

The success of this system requires three techniques:

1. Information gathering both from customers and from management on the process and cost involved; decisions must be based on facts *not instinct*.
2. Recognising *competition* and keeping ahead of it, and
3. Concentrating on processes not individual tasks or *people*.

The italics are mine. I find these ideas difficult to accommodate in an educational framework. Cortada claims that TQM is going to be hard work but very rewarding: "There are no road maps, yet we know results can be spectacular." (Cortada, 1988, p xiii). Now that, I think, is paralleled in education very well indeed.

Creech (1994) emphasises two aspects that are important to make TQM work: teamwork and decentralisation. For him teamwork is thinking small and thinking decentralised is getting out of the box, giving up boundaries on functions and jobs. This aspect of TQM certainly seems to have appeal to education. He has much to say on the empowerment of all, especially those at the frontline, as he calls them. It is the connection between authority and power that is important both here and in education.

Creech elaborates on the distribution of power and claims it is not an abstract issue but one that needs a practical resolution before improvement can begin. This is the kind of thinking that is needed in education where de-motivation has been exacerbated by multiple changes in policy in a very short time. In the balance and harmony that is needed to ease the tension between the authority of the state and professional autonomy, empowerment must be a key issue.

"*Think big about what you can achieve; think small about how to achieve it.*" (Creech, 1994, p 25.) If there were one slogan that is apposite for education this must be it. To understand this in terms of managing people is helpful but it underscores an approach to education that is vitally important. Teachers in the classroom have to have the big picture of possibilities and potentials, but they must also manage the day-to-day

incremental steps needed to get there. Management techniques have much to teach us here.

It is important to start from the point of view of the human spirit and from the bottom up. First things first. That's where the job gets done – or undone. Any organization will be only as successful those at the bottom are willing to make it. Their focus, spirit, enthusiasm, objectivity, and motivation are matters that transcend all others in importance (Creech, 1994, p 26).

In these respects the quality movement left education wanting. In an area where it could well have adopted this understanding, it has not. Size and empowerment were the most discussed issues in the conversations when I asked teachers "What is bothering you most in education?" Both of these ideas certainly spoke to that audience.

20 years after the Ruskin speech, Callaghan (1996) commented:

And in our schools, teachers, who are the key to success or failure, feel undervalued and unfairly criticised. Educational progress has been marred by the government's dogmatic market-driven ideology, by its dislike of local authorities, and by its general disrespect for public servants and public service. (Guardian Online, Accessed July 2007.)

The empowerment issue brings two stories to mind. One is:

Another publishing house was preparing a new edition of its widely used series (elementary readers). One of us, asked to consult, objected in detail to the blandness of the stories proposed. The company's vice-president in charge of textbooks confessed that he, too, thought that the stories would bore young readers, but he was obliged to keep in mind that neither children nor teachers buy textbooks: school boards and superintendents do. (Bettelheim and Zelan, in Deming, 2000, p27).

The second story is contained in a letter from the Duke of Wellington during the Napoleonic Wars, which is also a telling tale about empowerment. Wellington's comments reflect the thoughts of many head teachers and teachers who bemoan the amount of paper work and bureaucracy required by government officialdom. They

question which is more important, to get the paper work done correctly or to get on with the enormous task of teaching the nation's children. (I understand that the notion of empowerment can be interpreted differently. The power of position and wealth is not the point I am making but I acknowledge that it is only someone with the social position of Wellington that could make such a comment.) Here is the letter, given in its entirety.

Gentlemen:

Whilst marching to Portugal to a position which commands the approach to Madrid and the French forces, my officers have been diligently complying with your request which has been sent by H.M. ship from London to Lisbon and then by dispatch rider to our headquarters.

We have enumerated our saddles, bridles, tents and tent poles, and all manner of sundry items for which His Majesty's Government holds me accountable. I have dispatched reports on the character, wit and spleen of every officer. Each item and every farthing has been accounted for, with two regrettable exceptions for which I beg your indulgence. Unfortunately, the sum of one shilling and nine pence remains unaccounted for in one infantry battalion's petty cash and there has been hideous confusion as to the number of jars of raspberry jam issued to one cavalry regiment during a sandstorm in western Spain. This reprehensive carelessness may be related to the pressure of circumstances since we are at war with France, a fact which may come as a bit of a surprise to you gentlemen in Whitehall.

This brings me to my present purpose, which is to request elucidation of my instructions from His Majesty's Government, so that I may better understand why I am dragging an army over these barren plains. I construe that perforce it must be one of two alternative duties. I shall pursue either one with the best of my ability but I cannot do both; 1. To train an army of uniformed British clerks in Spain for the benefit of the accountants and copy boys in London or perchance, 2. To see to it that the forces of Napoleon are driven out of Spain.

Your most obedient servant,

Wellington. (Cited in Creech, 1994, p 449).

Moving on to Excellence

I have kept Tom Peters' book, *In Search of Excellence* (1982), separate and last in this section because it is not about the quality movement and yet it shows the direction in

which the quality movement has moved. It is the title that attracted me because excellence is something that seemed to be ignored in the management literature that I engaged with or so much reduced by definitions that it ceased to have meaning. Peters is dedicated to excellence and how to achieve it. He gives a valuable insight into how the business world tackles this problem of defining excellence and using the concept. He states in his introduction that excellence is about people and not numbers and measurements. As examples, he continues by giving us an insight into what he calls the 'ambiguity and paradox' of being human (Peters, 1982, p 89). He believes we all want to be part of a crowd but also 'to stick out'. He gives us examples of what makes people tick and what ticks them off. Managing for this ambiguity, Peters claims, is what makes companies work at the excellent rather than mediocre level (p xxiv). These ideas resonate well with educational ideas where inconsistent ideals or practices sit side by side: accepting authority and pursuing critical thinking, working within a discipline and being open to new approaches, being strict and laid back, following the rules but allowing exceptions.

Peters makes a real case for not being obsessed with numbers and measurements, being open to suggestions and not using a 'fat rule book', making room for mistakes so that everyone has some control which is meaningful, not token. Peters is prepared to throw out traditional theories of achieving success in business

...principally because our evidence about how human beings work - individually and in large groups - leads us to revise several important economic tenets dealing with size (scale economies), precision (limits to analysis) and the ability to achieve extraordinary results (particularly quality) with quite average people. (Peters, 1982, p xxv.)

Peters is hitting home at much of what I hear from the teachers. The size of schools is a big issue for some of the teachers with whom I converse, Margaret, Lynn and Cassandra in particular. Some schools manage to use size to their advantage, those in which Liz and David had experience, for instance. What we learn from Peters and from my conversations is that size of institution matters. Being part of a huge corporation or

large school can be counter productive unless the concept of teamwork has real meaning. If it does not, fragmentation can result: "Excellent companies were dividing things up and pushing authority down the line." (Peters, 1982, p 81.) John Tomlinson in his conversation (See Appendix A) argued that quality could be achieved in very large organisations provided this sense of shared values was retained. He contrasted the head of an outstanding small school (fewer than 100 pupils) and his work as CEO of a large county (Cheshire) and claimed that both achieved excellence because of a shared ethos and teamwork. He admitted that his own was the more difficult task because it was more diverse, but shared values and a sense of empowerment were key in all cases. As Peters claims, "the co-existence of firm central direction and maximum individual autonomy" (Peters, 1982, p 318) is what creates excellence.

For Peters, the management of certain human characteristics, which he lists definitively, reveals how companies become excellent. As an example he examines the notion that if you expect risk taking and innovation then you can't also punish failures (Peters, 1982, p 57). This is a simple but revolutionary idea. He cites Skinner (1971, p 322) and rightly points to the outcomes of negative reinforcement which has unpredictable results and often leads to frenetic, unguided activity. This perhaps helps to explain why some teachers give up teaching after an Ofsted inspection. "No more Ofsteds" (Emily and Alison in conversation, Appendix A). Dee Hock (1980) at Visa, summed up the problem when he said, "Substituting rules for judgement starts a self-defeating cycle, since judgement can only be developed by using it." (Cited in Peters, 1982, p 44.)

Unfortunately Peters relies on lists, which although intuitive and informative are an attempt to confine the concept of excellence in definitions. His book is a psychological tour de force and is still read as a handbook of ideas. Reducing excellence to another set of checklists maybe an excellent way to proceed with companies and businesses, but I will argue that stories are much more relevant in the understanding of quality in education and are in fact an excellent way for teachers to talk about it and understand it. Peters himself sees no problem in both relying on lists in part of his book and later using stories to great effect. I contend that the stories rather than the lists are the reason his

book is so easy to read. Peters informs us that in fact it is stories that form the basis of his theory. In the introduction to his book *In Search of Excellence* (1982), he tells stories which illustrate excellence for him. And he continues

What really fascinated us as we began to pursue our survey of corporate excellence [was that] the more we dug the more we realized that excellent companies abounded in such stories and imagery.... field data too often overlooked in books on management-namely specific, concrete examples from the companies themselves.” (Peters, 1982, p xxi).

Peters does not let the stories speak for themselves. He goes on to analyse them and make definitive lists. I ask myself whether he is another guru of the same genre as Juran and Deming. He is very persuasive, even seductive but the underling thesis is always to bring about improvements in the market economy. The aim of quality is never intrinsically considered, and although applying his methods to education may have benefits in so far as schools as institutions require to be managed - and I think they do – I believe they can have little to add in a truly educational sense.

Having learned about the growth of the quality movement in industry, commerce and business I was able to understand the definitions of these words and concepts that became part of the educational language by the 1990s. The next section of this chapter is a review of some of the ideas taken from the quality movement and implemented by teachers in schools.

Section three: TQM in education

In this section I continue the conversation by invoking the voices of teachers who have put some of these innovative ideas into practice. It was not appropriate to make a synthesis of the argument for or against the use of TQM or other technical quality procedures since each author clearly had different interpretations of how to adapt TQM to educational use and more importantly, they had differing problems and reservations about why they were successful or not. Consequently I have categorised my review

under headings that indicate the underlying conceptual frameworks, and discussed them in the conversational manner that is in keeping with the style of the thesis. I then review an article by Hart (1997), which criticises and clarifies many of the ideas that I have discussed in this section.

The expression 'a quality education' may well have been in use for a long time in ordinary discourse. In educational or philosophical writings I have not found this particular expression before the White Paper, *Teaching Quality* (1983). Since the Reform act of 1988 it has become increasingly part of the language of education. Hopkins, Ainscow and West (1994) give definitions of effective schools which require eight listed characteristics and are outcome focused with a firm curriculum based leadership. This approach of listing in an assertive and exclusionary manner is found in many of the writings on effectiveness (Frith and Mahoney, 1994; Mortimore, Sammons and Thomas, 1997; Nuttall, 1995, Treddlie and Reynolds, 2000.) The inclusion of effective leadership, shared values, good communication and collaboration are neither revolutionary nor debatable. But as Hopkins claims:

... the problem is that determining school 'quality' (for example, learning climate, capacity for change, ability to achieve a wide range of goals) is difficult to measure; the tendency therefore is to rely on easily measurable outcomes such as competitive examinations and standardized tests. (Hopkins, 1996, p 21.)

The difficulties in defining the concept of quality have proved too great to be reduced to checklists, no matter how encompassing and long the lists maybe. Hence those things that can be measured have become the hallmark of quality. These ideas are lifted directly from the early stages of the quality movement discussed in section two.

There are those who believe that a quality school is necessary in order to achieve a quality education (Hopkins, 1996; Mortimore, 1999; Parsons, 1994) whereas there are others who believe that a quality education, whatever we may believe that is, is what creates a quality school (Greene, 1998; Morley and Rassool, 1999). It seems to me that these two differing points of view are not clearly stated in the literature of the former

group and there is a readiness to slip from one to the other, which confuses the argument. The elaboration of quality programmes, systems or assurances serves to clarify in the minds of the authors how to identify problems, make improvements and establish systematic agendas in order to achieve not just a quality education, meaning not only one that reaches the required standard, but also one that is of the highest standard. Although the first can be achieved through programmes of measurements and what we now call quality assurance or quality control systems, these results cannot be equated with the essentially contested concept of quality in the second sense.

Many of the 'quality' debates about education are often only concerned with extrinsic aims. Education is for the state, the society, for citizenship, or for employment. Thus it is easy to align the systems argument with these concepts of education because they are requiring education to fit us for something else. Fitness for purpose is part of the quality ideology incorporated from industry and since this is likely to resonate well with public institutions, which are maintained for some purpose other than self-perpetuation, it is easier to make the connection with administrators and sponsors of those institutions rather than the teachers. However, the idea of education being worthwhile for itself, having something intrinsically of value is part of both the common sense understanding of education as well as the philosophical discourse in philosophy of education. Some philosophers feel strongly that the quality and effectiveness measures are missing something important (Hart 1997; Hogan 1995; Greene 1998; Smith 1998). The literature suggests that the current eagerness to improve our schools and make them more effective according to quality control measures concentrates on all those things that pertain to the institution. Hogan (1995), Morley and Rassool, (1999) and Greene (1998), all of whom criticise the approach, suggest that a quality education is more concerned with the teacher and student, and is much more difficult to straightjacket into definitions, checklists or characteristics.

Carl Parsons (1994), writing as an educationalist, offers many different definitions of quality: what the customer wants, what satisfies the customer, what the customer needs,

what fits the purpose, what does the job. They are distinct definitions directly arising from the nomenclature of the industrial world. Definitions of quality are reduced finally to a British Standard number:

Colleges and other educational establishments are from August 1, 1994 going for Quality Certification BS EN ISO 9000 so as to be in line with International standards. (Parsons, 1994, p 1.) (British Standard European Norm International Standards Organization 9000 refers to quality management standards).

In order to understand this certification Parsons explains, "Quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs." (British Standards 1987, cited in Parsons 1994, p 1.) This is very much the cornerstone definition found throughout the literature which is clearly from the Deming School of management and more obviously from TQM. Yet there are many instances when Parsons cannot find the right fit between theory and practice. Having given a list of reasons of the advantages of the quality system that he describes, he has reservations.

The drawbacks are less about the expense of setting up and maintaining the system – though certification is expensive – than with the language and structure of the system and the fact that it does not apply naturally to education. (Parsons, 1994, p 4.)

It is this difficulty, of defining terms such as quality, that Morley and Rassool (1999) highlight.

The ubiquitous use of terms such as 'effectiveness', 'quality' and 'achievement' does not automatically denote shared meanings and common understandings. School effectiveness raises questions about what works, rather than about whose interests are being served. (Morley and Rassool, 1999, p 135.)

But the interests of those who wish to compare results, to define a school by its academic successes or to label for purposes of identifying passing and failing schools, are being served. The broader vision of education is unable to be so confined and

defined and offers no clear blueprint for success. That is not to say that the running of the school does not need clear and defined guidelines for achieving a well-run school that will enable and empower all those who learn within its environment. It is also not to say that there are not better practices and better strategies for teachers and students for learning and teaching. But it is to say that what counts as education is not only that part of the curriculum that can be tested and counted. As Morley and Rassool (1999) write,

Education is discursive, with diverse sets of aims that extend beyond the measurable. It does not only revolve around examination results. It deals with the development of diverse groups of people in relation to culture and society. (Morley and Rassool, 1999, p 129.)

For them, there is a distinction between learning the necessary roots or basics of any academic discipline, and restraining learning and teaching within target boundaries, which tend to confine rather than liberate the intelligence, imagination and emotion:

We argue that the preoccupation with performance is having a detrimental effect on more complex areas of school life, such as affective and aesthetic domains.... Schools have been reinvented as financial bodies.... a new audit culture has emerged. (Morley and Rassool, 1999, pp 131-132.)

Much of the effectiveness argument insists that if the outcomes are achieved this school has quality. It is a neat and measurable solution to a very confusing problem about quality. But does it really answer the question? Is the achievement of measurable outcomes a realistic or even common sense view of what we mean by a quality education? I contend that education and its value is a rather more messy enterprise.

Greene writes

It is through and by means of education, many of us believe, that individuals can be provoked to reach beyond themselves in their intersubjective space. It is through and by means of education that they may become empowered to think about what they are doing, to become mindful, to share meanings, to conceptualise, to make varied sense of their lived worlds. (Greene, 1998, p 12.)

And it is no good saying that this is what examination results reveal, even with value added considerations. The tenor of Greene's writing is stating that we have lost sight of education in the push for "effectiveness," "proficiency," "efficiency," and an ill-defined, one-dimensional "excellence." But why should we not have both the dreams of an ideal education and the realities of effective state education? There are inconsistencies in the concept of education, there are contradictions and both are evident in schooling. Postman (1996) claims that America public schools will fail unless there is a conscious decision to revolt against the quality movement with all its standards and testing and educate for critical thinking. There are

...two contradictory reasons for schooling. One is that schools must teach the young to accept the world as it is, with all of their culture's rules, requirements, constraints, and even prejudices. The other is that the young should be taught to be critical thinkers, so that they become men and women of independent mind, distanced from the conventional wisdom of their own time and with strength and skill enough to change what is wrong. (Postman, 1996, p 60.)

Customer and service provider

Parsons has no problem identifying the customer in primary education. "Quality focuses are specific and ... are directed at parents as customers in a very real sense." (Parsons, 1994, p 17.) On dealing with parent criticism of teachers he comments that "it is best if the 'customers' can focus on the service rather than the person." And later, "customer orientation is vital if a quality service is to be delivered." (Parsons, 1994, p 17.) There is no clearer definition of what he and the contributors to his book believe quality education is about. It is about giving a service, and the final arbiters of the quality of this service are the people for whom you are providing it. Ruth Hendry (1994) adds that "in these days of supposed parental choice, if we are not delivering what parents perceive to be a 'quality' education to their children, their right is to remove them to another school" (p 28). With this hanging over our heads she says it is easy to identify with business management because:

...the purpose of work is to provide customers with something that will delight them and make them want to keep paying your salary, by buying the product or service you provide. (Hendry, 1994, p 29.)

There is total identification with the business world, the management of commerce and the manufacturing processes. Perceiving education as a product, the idea of children and /or parents as customers precludes other valid conceptions of the child or the parent from being considered. Kevin Buckley (1994) states how important it is to identify the customer. He writes about parents as customers and suggests that when parents and schools are aiming at the same target there is much improvement. "Increased achievement may be due to the lessening of distance between the goals of home and the goals of the school" (p37). But I claim that it has always been a common sense fact that unless teachers and parents work together, the child is unlikely to make progress. This success is not as a result of considering parent or children as customers.

Robert Whatmough argues that sixth formers are clients or customers because,

... there is no legal obligation on 16+ students to attend any form of education, schools compete with colleges to attract their customers, students are as free to leave an institution as they are to join it, and 16 + students are more independent from their parents and are thus more readily seen as primary customers ... from the point of view of both institutional survival and improvement, students' own definitions of quality have to be a decisive influence in the development of 16+ provision. (Whatmough, 1994, p 94.)

Quality education has now become what the pupil says it is. How can we make sense of the idea that a pupil is the one seeking education and at the same time dictating what that education is? Education and training are confused in this idea. If education is a product then of course the pupils can know what it is before they have it. If education is not a product, if it is a process which is different for each person, how could a pupil dictate to the teacher what that process is? When no one, from the most highly educated person to the most humble of students, can entirely agree on what education is, we ask our sixth formers to define quality education? Whatmough eventually agrees that sometimes

professional decisions will have to be made and the supplier-customer relationship is difficult to maintain.

If I as a head teacher asked for input from my children on what they want in school, we would have a curriculum of games, computers, free time, art, library and playtime. If I treated the parents of my pupils as the customer I would be training the children in blind obedience to their parents, and preparing them for jobs in the 'real' world. If I treated my governors as customers I would abandon general education and train pupils in test taking skills, make absenteeism so heavily punishable that pupils wouldn't dare miss a day, and employ only the lowest paid teachers. All of the above have something to recommend them, but none of them is a common sense option as an overall view. There are parts of the curriculum that as a professional I feel should be included whether the children want them or not. There are many parts of the curriculum they cannot have an opinion on because they are not in a position to know. How can they judge if they want algebra before they have been introduced to it? Parents expect me to have a professional opinion on what is to count for education; that is why I was selected to run the school. Governors have to be reconciled with other aims in schools; they too look to the head for professional input. None of these are my customers; they are all partners in differing ways. The views that schools provide a service as industry and commerce do, that teachers are service providers or producers and the students or the children are either clients or joint clients with their parents and have the usual and "customary" rights of customers, are much more relevant to instruction than education. If we accept these as synonymous we have compromised and restricted the concept of education. Training, instruction, certification, or licensing all have a pre-set quality. One can see up front what one is getting, paying for and hoping to obtain. Training is only a small part of what we imply when we say education. But it is that small part which refers to extrinsic aims which makes the whole education and quality debate problematic.

Systems and TQM

Having committed himself to TQM as a worthwhile endeavour for schools, Hendry adds that it is continuous improvement that is the star attraction.

If culture is the personality of an organisation, then a quality school is restless, constantly questioning, never satisfied, challenging norms and believing that things can always be better. Quality management requires belief in an infinite capacity for improvement. (Hendry, 1994, p 29.)

Such an attitude to education is commendable, but Hendry is equating quality schools with quality management. It is this sort of slippage between definitions, and /or metaphors that confuses the issues. Similarly Buckley (1994) describes how successful the 'quality circle' (part of the TQM package) is in getting parents and teachers to communicate. It has a successful outcome but we do not need to think of parents as customers in order to achieve this state of affairs. He concludes with relating how one of his staff members 'turned himself around' during the process and felt happier and more valued than beforehand. "The quality circle approach has served to satisfy not only our customers but ourselves too." He quotes West- Burnham: "Quality can only be achieved by a valued work force" (1992, p 26). Here I think he is stating too much since I can quote many instances of high quality teaching by a teacher who was not valued by the administration and not much by the other members of staff either. The use of the word 'only' destroys the line of argument. It is much more likely that a quality school would be composed of teachers who feel valued, but it is not a necessity.

Healy explains why her school took on TQM.

On our visits to business and industry it became apparent that one way of ensuring delivery of quality was to accredit the systems in a business to BS 5750 standard. As a school we realised the tremendous potential that existed in BS

5750 and TQM. We believed TQM could be adapted to a school context; it is a high ideal, but we felt it had tremendous implications for the culture of the institution: a) in how things were done; b) in how it enmeshed approach, attitude, aspiration and how people felt about the institution within which they work. (Healy, 1994, p 65.)

And indeed it does. She gives lists of evidence and results (p66-67) which are impressive. Many of the outcomes she describes as a result of the process have benefited the school in its management. It is stated that quality is something that we 'deliver'. Delivery of the curriculum is making the curriculum a product simply by using that language construction. Delivering quality as distinct from a quality product is more difficult to understand unless we have equated the very word 'quality' with customer satisfaction, which is part of the TQM lexicography; in which case Healy is also aligning herself with the idea that a quality educational institution is one that satisfies its customers. This seems to be a set up for a circuitous argument.

Harris incorporates 'quality training', into her A Level Theatre studies. She writes about quality circles in terms which are straight out of Deming:

At best, they could raise the standards of life and happiness for all interested parties and they would help the drive towards better examination results. (Harris, 1994, p 80.)

Franklin relates his college's achievement of the BS 5750 and how successful it has been. He wants to add that quality isn't something attained and then finished with. It is an on-going process. His conclusion is illuminating:

A system is essential. But a system is only a system, nothing more. A system cannot build quality into a product any more than scaffolding can build a pile of bricks into a house. It is a framework, within which work is done. It is all structure, all form and no content. (Franklin, 1994, 78.)

Here we have a dedicated TQM proponent giving us an excellent example of why such a 'system' cannot give us the educational goods, to use a manufacturing phrase.

Systems may be necessary, in contrast, for the running of a school. The administration of an institution requires organisation, and a well-run organisation generally leads to achieving the set goals. And while it is likely that a well-run school will produce a good education for its students, there is no necessary connection between the two. It is possible that a quality education can be gained under a tree. It is possible in a badly run school, but it is not likely. Just as we are less likely to be well motivated to learn if we are hungry and tired, we are more likely to learn in an atmosphere of expectation and encouragement. But the single most important ingredient, which differentiates bulimic style learning from the highly nutritious sort that I want to call quality education, is the teacher and the relationship with the individual child or student.

Thinking of schools as coterminous with education is like thinking a well-organised kitchen is the same as a gourmet meal. The restaurant gets the rating, but it is neither the building nor the organisation that achieves the award. It is the chef and the assistants and their relationship and skills with the ingredients that make the grade. Neil Postman (1996) writes about the use of metaphor in education. He claims that “metaphors control what we say, and to some extent what we say controls what we see” (p186). If we use a business metaphor, we see education as a business; if we use the metaphors of manufacturing quality control then that is how we perceive quality education. I develop the ideas on metaphors more fully in Chapter 4.

Sanders explains that the successful incorporation of much of the TQM ideology brought about changes that he found difficult to adhere to. The quality system was not fully able to accommodate the constant change and disruption to the teachers. He thought that most would have decided it was all a waste of time and money and:

... that will be a shame, for there is nothing so irksome as expending time, energy and money in producing a gilded top quality stick with which to beat yourself. (Sanders, 1994, p 125).

Not only do I read some misgivings about the TQM methodology but also I read a metaphor that describes how teachers feel when under the pressure of performance.

Values and Quality

Mortimore, Sammons and Thomas (1996) give a great deal of quantified information packed into an interesting argument about how to evaluate school effectiveness. Many definitions of quality and effectiveness are given which all point to an institutional approach to understanding these concepts. Notes about teachers and classroom practices reinforce the authors' argument that schools as institutions, and departments within schools, are where we can evaluate not only the quality and effectiveness of those places but also of education itself. Quality schools and quality education have for their primary purpose usefulness in society and contribution to the workings of the national economy. Where is there room in this picture of education for the ideal of personal potential, or the personal freedom that Greene writes about?

An education for freedom must move beyond function, beyond the subordination of persons to external ends. It must move beyond mere performance to action, which entails the taking of initiatives. (Greene, 1998, p 132.)

There is to my mind no question that teachers who provide a quality education are seeking this freedom for themselves and their students. They are able to seize opportunities when they occur, whether as part of the ordained curriculum or not. The curriculum may be constraining, but in the right hands it need not strangle. It is the teacher who makes the difference and the stories related in the conversations in Chapter 4 attest to this view.

Mortimore, Sammons and Thomas (1997) argue that school effectiveness and improvement are genuinely possible and desirable through the use of statistical evidence derived from student outcomes. They sharply dismiss Pring (1995), Elliott (1996) and Hamilton (1996), who argue for the primacy of the teacher pupil relationship:

In recent years some authors (for example, Pring, 1995; Elliott, 1996; Hamilton, 1996) have criticised the basis and values underlying school effectiveness research. These criticisms have focused on ... the emphasis given to students' educational outcomes, contrasting this adversely with notions of educational quality in which the process – in particular the quality of teacher-student relationships – is all important Pring (1995) has argued that the field [school effectiveness] should not be seen as part of educational research at all because, on his view, its context is not 'educational', although this is not an argument that we accept! (Mortimore, Sammons and Thomas, 1997, p7.)

Elliott (1996) focuses particularly on the teaching learning process rather than on outcomes and claims that learning is unobservable and can only be "gauged indirectly" by its outcomes. Mortimore and Sammons' response is that measurable results are what will count and that in the end they are the only scientific way of finding out if there has been improvement. Like all passionate educators they also claim that what they are doing is promoting effectiveness because it is an essential characteristic of a "good" school:

Thus, although we would not argue that an effective school would invariably be a good one, we conclude that it is a necessary, if not sufficient, precondition. In addition, we find it hard to believe that any acceptable definition of a "good" school could be proposed which did not include academic effectiveness – by which we mean the extent to which student progress is fostered – as an essential component. (Mortimore and Sammons, 1997, p 8.)

This is a valuable source of information with statistics and cogent and compelling conclusions drawn from them. The authors are careful to conclude that results are time specific and cannot be used to predict in every instance. They are useful for telling which outcomes a school is promoting, over what time period and for whom.

Academic emphasis, teacher expectations and consistency in practice can be seen as influences on the quality of teaching both in a school and in specific departments. (Mortimore and Sammons, 1997, p 136.)

On the following page, quality of teaching is equated with academic results, and thus even in the questionnaire responses from which this evidence is gained there is the slip

from the definition which is clearly defined as outcomes, to the opinion of the head teacher making a value judgement on individuals, and then another to the number of examination successes. "Unsurprisingly, indicators of the quality of teaching staff were found to be relevant." (Mortimore and Sammons, 1997, p 137.) Mortimore and Sammons believe such indicators cannot be quantified but they see them as relevant. But I think these judgements and evaluations are more than just another dimension to be considered; they are fundamentally important. In the assessment of quality, we are obliged to make value judgements. They are not an attractive adjunct. This same page also shows the table of results that uses the terms 'good', 'average' and 'poor' to evaluate quality of teaching. "Our results demonstrate the importance of high quality teaching for overall GCSE performance and performance in specific subjects" (p142). The 'high quality' grading is from head teachers and head of departments' own evaluations. The value attributed to such judgements is all-important to those who do not base their concept of quality on a top down approach and who do not think that measurable outcomes are the defining feature of education.

The 'bottom up' approach can be seen when Griffiths and Davies (1995) write about the interest in doing their action research school based project, saying they are "... interested in creating the best possible learning environment for every individual child." And later,

In creating fair schools, we are also doing something towards creating a fair society. Schools where children are treated with fairness and justice and where they learn to treat others the same way are an important part of the creation of a better world for everybody. (Griffiths and Davies, 1995, p 3.)

There is no mention of the words equality or quality, but both concepts are implied here. Throughout Griffiths and Davis' book there are examples of teaching/learning situations where the role of equality underpins the quality of the education. The importance of action research, which is typically bottom up, is demonstrated throughout the details of the teaching and the reflecting sessions – for example,

Reflective action-research can feel quite unsettling. Because the process is responsive to the views of others and to the changing situation, it is impossible to keep tight control of what happens. This is in contrast to the idea of rational action in more 'scientific research and development' where it is important to stick to predetermined aims and objectives. (Griffiths and Davies, 1995, p 198.)

Judging by results, and studying outcomes combined with the market forces approach, gives us objectivity in the accumulation of statistics. From these statistics, interpretations and recommendations become the basis of action. Action which, it is argued will bring improvement, greater effectiveness and as a matter of definition a higher quality education. This approach is radically different from those like Griffiths and Davis who present a less defined but more realistic manner of disentangling from their experiences and research at the teacher and student level. It is also important to note that the view of schools and of learning in a messy environment gave the project its real value.

In other words the practical constraints on the project could also be regarded as strength. Any actions and conclusions that come out of it are rooted not in the 'hard high ground' of scientific, laboratory research, but in the 'swampy lowlands' of the complex real world, to use a metaphor made famous by Schon (1983). To extend this metaphor, the high ground may look impressive, but things actually grow and flourish in the fertile lowlands. (Griffiths and Davis, 1995, p 197.)

Mem Fox (1993), in her book *Radical Reflections*, also gives voice to education that is not dependent entirely on numbers and writes passionately about reading literature to children. She never uses the word 'quality' yet the entire book is about the sort of excellence teachers strive for. One of her stories when writing about the power of literature is from a teacher in a hospital school. (In America a 'basal' is a book from a set reading scheme.)

One of her students was a girl who had been badly burned and was in great pain. She had been in hospital for three months. One day her father was on one side of the child's bed and her teacher on the other, reading from a typically funny Paul

Jennings story. At one point the girl's face cracked into a smile, her first smile for three months. Her father was so happy he wept. Such is the power of literature, which no basal can ever hope to achieve. (Fox, 1993, p 147.)

The Qualitymongers

In this last part of section 3, I comment on the article by Hart *The Qualitymongers*, (1997) so titled since it aptly argues against the current trend in 'quality' talk. There is much talk of quality being in education, nursing care or transport systems without any attempt at defining quality other than in measurable terms. Hart advocates a closer look at what we mean by quality in education and suggests that adopting the industrial model leaves no room for independent judgement on what counts for quality, nor for the creation of professional standards.

In short, 'quality' in 'quality assurance' is a technical notion, only tenuously linked to 'quality' as the term is used in ordinary speech....[which] is quality....'good of its kind'. (Hart, 1997, p 299.)

Hart argues further that a piece of quality writing in history, for instance is good because it is good 'as history' and not that it fits some purpose outside of history. This is quality with reference to what education is valued for, what it is worth in itself and not for all those purposes that those outside of education want to make it fit for. (This discussion of instrumental ends is the subject of dialogue 6 in Chapter 6.)

Unlike Hart who thinks schools have not been given a definition of quality, I claim that schools have been instructed quite clearly that quality consists in achieving measurable outcomes. I argue that to accredit quality in education involves a value judgement which will inevitably be contestable. This is in direct contrast to the use of the word 'quality' as used in mass production, quality control and now in quality schools.

Quality assurance cannot allow for transformations within a discipline. The standards are set. Education, as any academic discipline, or as any living organisation, is bound to change. What may be an appropriate requirement in

today's curriculum for it to be rated satisfactory or excellent may not be the same next year, next decade and surely not in the next century? (Hart, 1997, p 300.)

If we tie down what we mean by quality we are not only inhibiting creativity in the classroom but also denying a fundamental characteristic of education: its changing and transforming nature. Hart claims that it is understandable that there are agencies that have a predetermined purpose for our schools, and as such quality assurance programmes are a ready tool for examining whether those purposes are being met. If we accept this stance we have been gulled, as Hart says, "into thinking that nothing has been sacrificed in the process." I would change that to "nothing of value", because it is that with which we are concerned. Hart explains that education is not a service and therefore cannot be rated in the way that service industries are. The nature of education cannot be separated from the idea of service, especially when we are considering state schools. There are elements of 'service provision' in education just as there are elements of 'service provision' in medicine. The danger is that in making teachers providers of education, or doctors providers of health care, the metaphor of delivery and product is reinforced and does nothing to enhance the nature of the teacher/learner or doctor/patient relationship which is central. In agreeing with Hart that education is not a service I am agreeing that it is not part of a service industry providing goods or products that are delivered to customers.

I shall argue that a quality education depends on individual judgements that affect and have affected individuals in diverse ways. Quality in education is not dependent upon pre-set standards applicable to all. Although I might recognise what counted for quality in my own education I cannot infer that it counts for all, though it may do so for some. This does not preclude me from making inquiries into what counts for quality in the hope of finding some underlying principles which will enable me to say that quality does not consist in checklists, even if, at this stage of my argument, I can't say exactly what it is.

Quality, meaning of satisfactory standard as well as meaning excellent, exists in the transformative nature of education. It exists in the moment of discovery, the moments of finding an expanded view, the extended time when a student finds new ideas, fresh challenges. These are not rare or rarefied moments that an idealist is propounding. This is the ordinary stuff of teaching. It happens. It cannot be prescribed, for it cannot be measured and it certainly cannot be tested. It can be hoped for and expected. It is attainable. Brilliant teachers and ordinary teachers, mature and newly qualified teachers all experience these expanding moments, which change the student, and the teacher too.

The difference it seems to me is that we make judgements and we can be open to discussion. We have abdicated our sense of judgement when we allow another agency to dictate what those standards should be. When the standards proposed are not open for discussion, as a teacher your standards, judgements and ideas are not part of the discourse of education. Applying the standards set out in quality assurance creates “a substitute for judgement, which would get us out of having to live, think and feel for ourselves” (Hart, 1997, p 304.) He sees the trend leading to mediocrity if there is no place for the critical voice for the contradictions. I have seen the very embodiment of Hart’s worst fears. My school district in Texas positively and openly pursued the line that you must follow the district’s rules about teaching content and methods. Reliance on test scores as indication of progress and/or improvement led to teaching to the test, for the test and nothing but the test.

The conclusion of Hart’s paper puts actions into words. The description of Wittgenstein’s lecture from two differing points of view is very much part of the difference between seeing education as training or teaching. Hart gives a fictional report on how Wittgenstein’s teaching would be reviewed today by the inspectorate. This is followed by Malcolm’s real life description from his *Memoir* (1958 p 26). Whereas the former saw the failings and assessed this lecturer to be a disaster, the latter gave a description of a teacher actually doing philosophy with his students which he found ‘terrifying’ but left him in no doubt about intensity and engagement. Both judgements are valid, Hart argues, but it is having debate about standards that allows an

individual to realise what is worth fighting for in the standards that you wish to defend. Hart concludes that despite all the criticisms of Wittgenstein as a lecturer he was ‘the exemplar of complete seriousness and absorption in thinking...’ (p 307).

Having been a student of both types of university lecturer I know there are places and times when the organised structured lesson and the handout are extremely useful, especially when it comes to standard type examinations. But the conversational type ‘lecture’ when we struggled with new ideas, conflicting concepts and alternative perspectives are the ones that I remember as thrilling. Those “conversations” are the ones that encouraged and inspired me to be forever a student of philosophy. As Hart rightly concludes, our evaluations are subject to debate. Mine are as individual as the statutory ones are general. They are each and every one debatable. Mandating what is to count as quality in education is simply misappropriating two essentially contestable concepts, namely education and quality.

Section 4: recent documents

In the final part of this review I look at a recent policy document in education, *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003), which I review in some detail with references to *The National Primary Strategy* (2003) and *Every Child Matters* (2003). This forms the final part of the review of definitions and interventions proposing quality and is the last part of this conversation between policy documents and practising teachers. I intend to show by reviewing this document that technical definitions of quality are embedded in the language used in this document. As part of the continuing conversation about definitions and interventions I argue with the recommendations in this recent policy document and invoke teachers’ conversations where relevant.

I note that the concept of quality is framed within a business model in each of the three documents cited above, whether it is hidden or overt, and that understanding of the concept of quality has not changed from that indicated in the 1980s. I claim that it is

more entrenched after the many changes of the 80s and 90s. I note the still diminished role of professional judgement and I argue that without the freedom and responsibility to judge for oneself as a teacher in the classroom I fear there is less chance of excellence or enjoyment in schools and there is less likelihood of success for schools as a community focus for children's services. In this section I point forward to some of the conversations detailed in the following chapter. The relevance to current practice in this section called for these inclusions. After a general discussion of the document, I classify relevant comments under the headings of Customers and Deliveries, Quality, Quality Control, Conformance, TQM and Excellence.

My first reaction to reading *Excellence and Enjoyment* was disbelief. The 'new' directives in this document concerning integrated studies and being more creative with lesson plans describe exactly what good schools were doing in the 1970's and 1980's following the Plowden Report *Children and Their Primary Schools* (1967). Teachers were capable of and were expected to be integrating studies and to be creative with their own lesson plans. It was changes made by the government in the 1990's that prevented integrated studies and certainly restricted creativity in lesson plans since the curriculum was mandated and lesson plans were subject to time constraints. My second conversations with some of the teachers echoed my reaction.

Liz: Now we have to go back and try and remember how we used to tie all the studies in across the curriculum and give sufficient time for everything to be covered properly. It is OK for us who do remember doing this but these young teachers have no idea! And the real problem is that we still have to keep up with all the literacy and numeracy targets and all that and it's up to us to find a way of doing it all. (July 2004.)

The overall impression that I got from reading *Excellence and Enjoyment* was that I follow along very willingly because enough is stated that makes good sense to me and that which seems arbitrary or irrelevant does not seem to be an issue. Hall calls it 'seductive' (Hall, 2005) and I agree. When I examine more closely what is being said I get that familiar uneasy feeling that it isn't quite as it seems. Teachers are to have more

freedom, to be more professional, to be less directed at every turn, but there is always the insistence on the government's standards and they are explicit. Hall's critique of *Excellence and Enjoyment* discusses excellence and she thinks that centralised controls are being reinforced rather than loosened. She writes of a continued performance management culture where there is no getting away from the regime of test scores and targets and percentages and levels:

But the shift is not fundamentally about allowing more professional autonomy to teachers or loosening centralised control of schooling ... it is a shift towards individuation of teacher behaviours. This is very much in line with the performance management culture. (Hall, 2005, p3.)

There is always the presence of 'this is what is best – we, the government have decided it'. There is much that I want to agree with and want to see implemented, and it does seem as if teachers' voices have been heard when words like 'enjoyment' and 'creative' and 'innovative' are used, but I end up feeling despondent because I know that what the document is also telling me is that the authoritarian approach is relentless. Teachers can be creative and use their own ideas and they are encouraged to do so, but they will still be judged by the same standards and tests that are already in place. It's Henry Ford saying you can have any colour car you like as long as it is black. Excellence will be judged by pre-determined standards and you will get the seal of approval when you have met them. It reflects the business model of quality control.

The first paragraph of the Executive Summary in *Excellence and Enjoyment* states that the early years are critical and deserves the best teachers. They should be enjoyable in all sorts of ways. This is good news to those who feel children's lives are much more stressful than need be, especially at school (Hall 2005). Then teachers are told that some of them are doing well in some schools but all teachers have to take the lead themselves now. I hear, 'We, the government *have* got you this far (and haven't we, *meaning the government*, done well), but now you need to take it further yourselves.' Not that I think that is true, but even if it were I would say 'Yippee! Let's get on with it.'

But that is not the case. Teachers have to keep raising the standards and it is the teacher's responsibility to find ways to make it enjoyable as well. In bold is written:

Our goal is for every primary school to combine excellence in teaching with enjoyment of learning. (*Excellence and Enjoyment*, 2003, p 4.)

Excellence is clearly something that teachers have to work on. It means getting more pupils through the Standard Attainment Tests (SAT) at a higher level. Enjoyment is for the children. I would claim that if the teaching were excellent then both pupils *and teachers* would be enjoying themselves. But enjoyment is another of those concepts that is not simple to define. It can range from hedonistic pleasures of no consequence but the moment to the delayed pleasure of getting something difficult done and enjoying the completion of it. Whatever is implied, it is not clear what teachers are meant to be doing other than to 'jolly the kids along'. The excellence which I strongly feel is implied in a worthwhile education is that of fulfilling to the highest level possible what one *believes* one should be doing. The stories that teachers relate in their conversations (Chapter 4) give me strong evidence for this. In the teachers' stories excellence, is nearer the Greek concept of *arete* that I discuss in the philosophy chapter (Chapter 5). This concept covers excellence in the entire enterprise of education both as teacher and learner, where there is enjoyment in a gruelling challenge, or in relaxing reading quietly on your own. This understanding of excellence has not really got a lot to do with hedonistic enjoyment (Hartley 2006) except in the sense of enjoying fulfilling what you know you should be doing despite the difficulties involved. Hartley (2006) examines other aspects of this contradiction that I return to later. I think excellence is not only a teaching focus, it should also include the children's learning and behaviour; we should all be doing our very best. That some teachers do attain the outstanding approval rating, as David did in his rural school in Oxfordshire (Chapter 4) and I in a similar Texas system of evaluation, is probably due, and certainly was in my case, to successful compromise under extremely stressful conditions, ingenuity rather than creativity, innovative avoidance rather than innovation in compliance, and a certain confidence (which the government would no doubt call arrogance) of 'I know what is best for my children today' attitude.

On one hand it seems the policy is encouraging more professional judgement, but on the other hand quite clearly it is not. Teachers are told they can organise and plan lessons as they like *but* Ofsted will have to be convinced how the planning impacted the teaching, and almost as an aside teachers are exhorted not to waste time doing all that planning on their own. Good quality lesson plans are available and they would do well to use them! (Annex Planning Guidance).

If you have to apply in writing to make any changes you think necessary for your particular circumstances or your particular style, who, I wonder is going to apply to be innovative?

The Government, for its part will ...

Keep a strong focus on standards by maintaining the target of 85% of all primary school children to reach level 4 at Key stage 2 as soon as possible...

Provide Primary Schools with better performance data and challenge them to match the achievement of the best schools in similar circumstances to their own. (*Excellence and Enjoyment*, 2003, 2.9).

The market forces are clearly invoked with competition added to make sure you don't feel comfortable with your achievements.

Customers and deliveries

It is clear that in these recent documents the government has decided that it is the customer. It knows what it wants; it intends to get it and only those who give it what it wants will get the grade of satisfactory or outstanding. It may be claimed that parents and children are the customers but the government is clearly their spokesperson. Quality is what the customer says it is, and as far as schools are concerned the customer is the government. The voices of children and parents are very much an issue in *Every Child Matters* and they are undoubtedly considered the customers in this document, but again the 'command and control' (Demos 2006) attitude is behind all the directives about how to achieve what the government perceives as the parents or child's needs and wants. The

first rule that companies of any size will follow when making changes is to get everyone on board with a shared vision and work towards it, with those taking the practical roles also making the decisions (conversations with business managers Tony and Mike, in Chapter 4). To put schools at the centre of such overall organisation is logical and practical in the sense that schools are more a community focus for all children than any of the other services related to children. But I wonder seriously about the changing role of schools if they are to take on this onerous charge. When teachers' professional judgement is not valued in education in school, what value will it be granted in decisions concerning the whole life of a child? All undoubtedly share the vision – “We must all do better for the sake of our children” – but the getting there is not up to the politicians. It is up to the teachers and other professionals in the field. Kennedy in 1962 shared the vision of getting a man on to the moon. He did not stipulate how the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was to get there. Left to their brilliant ingenuity and lateral thinking, the professionals did it.

In *Excellence and Enjoyment* 6.16, Leading Practice, the programme for primary schools is discussed ‘with common criteria and branding.’ Is the consumer world so embedded in our language that we now have brands of schools? Or is this a typographical error for banding? In *Every Child Matters; Change for Children*, (2003) the customer and the delivery is emphasised particularly in the Foreword of the document. Quality of provision is discussed in the general sense of high standards as well as achieving what is pre determined. For the success of this magnitude of change, I claim there needs to be a change in attitude which cannot be legislated for. It can only be encouraged along with the right sort of empowerment at all levels. To refer to an example in the business literature, the Pershing missile was produced with zero defects, but the conclusion drawn was that it was not the quality control that had achieved it but the change in attitude in the people concerned; quality became everybody's job (Creech, 1994).

Delivery is used in many ways to reinforce the idea of product and customer. – for example, “The transformation can only be delivered.” I ask, why can't it be achieved?

If it (the product or service) is 'delivered', it is by someone for someone else.

Transformation is a difficult concept to parcel up in a box and deliver. "We now need to translate our common vision and commitment to change into real delivery on the ground." The ministers "responsible for delivery of services to children" sign it. If you are responsible for deliveries at a production plant you are in charge of logistics. Perhaps the ministers are in charge of logistics, 'the science of the movement and maintenance of military forces or the handling of an operation involving the movement of labour and materials' (Collins Dictionary, 1999).

Quality

Quality is invoked in many different ways in *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003):

3.5 Personalised and high *quality* services...

3.8 ...schools to work with other agencies, a new prospectus showing our vision of *quality* care.

3.11 High *quality* services will be integrated.

It is interesting that the examples given of services that have achieved some significant change made compelling reading for me. An integrated approach is ideal and these stories illuminated not only how such service could be provided but also how people had made the difference. e.g. Birmingham Royal Ballet cited on p 15 and Early Intervention, cited on p 19, of *Excellence and Enjoyment*. Stories about quality were easier to read and readily understandable. These stories did not typically invoke test results and were exceptions. Throughout the documents quality is defined in terms of measurable outcomes. We have to be 'focused on outcomes' (*Every Child Matters*, 1.5). I ask, why? Sometimes the process itself is as important as, if not more important than, the outcome? There has to be the most scrupulous investigation of outcomes by evaluation before giving the seal of approval. This notion of quality fits well with Juran's 'fitness for purpose' definition. It is apparent in *Excellence and Enjoyment* that teachers are

preparing children for the real world and education is something that makes for employability. There seems little reference to enjoyment of childhood or the experience that Dewey argued for, that which is 'truly educative'. For him this means the child taking responsibility and making decisions and questioning and discussing and making daily experiences relevant to the community of life in the school:

I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living...I believe that much of present education fails because it neglects the fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life. It conceives the school as a place where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain information is to be given, or where certain habits are to be formed.... The child must do these things for the sake of something else...As a result they do not become a part of the life experience of the child and so are not truly educative. (Dewey 1987, cited in Hall, 2006, p 5.)

These ideals, also pursued by Montessori, were certainly implicit in teacher preparation up to the beginning of the new strategies in the 1990's and still to this day strongly in evidence in some schools. This is not a concept of quality determined by the outcomes revealed by tests and results. The purpose of education according to *Excellence and Enjoyment* is not simply to enjoy childhood despite the titles, but to achieve in schools at a high standard, pre-determined by the government. In *Every Child Matters* the purpose is to achieve a co-operation and prevent child neglect or abuse. I note that these 'services' are to be 'delivered.'

Quality Control

Control is firmly in the hands of the government. It dictates what standards are appropriate and carries out inspections to see that they are attained. Failing schools are not discarded as components are in the production line, but reworked so as to fit better. In my personal experience this reworking can be brutal. One school, put into special measures, resulted in the suicide of one of my friends, the head teacher; and that evidence is not found in any research that I have studied. In a production line model this control is very efficient in terms of quality but inhumane in non-production line

endeavours. The science of quality control (Juran, 2002) is firmly in place with measures and ongoing controls built in to the system, but in education there is also the old fashioned inspection at the end of the process too. In this respect the government has one foot either side of the divide just to make sure.

“Standards have risen because the quality of teaching is better.” *Excellence and Enjoyment* (1.9). This is straight out of the quality control model. Specifications were met because of the quality control process. Or the product is as required because the standards (drawn up from the customer’s specifications) have been adhered to throughout the process. But in education it is not a straightforward cause and effect argument. It is highly debatable what ‘standards’ are acceptable in education, but teachers are expected to accept that ‘standards’ means achieving the correct percentage of level 4 at Key Stage 2. It is equally debatable what quality means, but we are to understand that it means teachers have followed the strategies correctly. Translated, it means that better test results have been caused by following the strategies. This statement is still debatable but at least it is a valid opinion. To make the causal link between the two with little attempt at definition is plainly misleading. This is the basic problem with the production line model. It works extremely well for products but not for people. It is open to discussion as to what caused the rise in standards in different schools, but in the production line it is clearly beginning with set standards and the continuous control of the process that causes improvement in production rates and of a ‘better quality’ product as the outcome.

In reforming children’s services the notion of central control overrides the words suggesting more local control. Thus quality reverts to the pre-determined standards rather than allowing for differences and different kinds of success. In a report on reforming children’s services, Demos ([Online Literacytrust.org.uk](http://OnlineLiteracytrust.org.uk) June 2007), which describes itself as “the think-tank for everyday democracy”, described an ongoing war of attrition between central and local government that “can only have negative consequences for young people”. It called on central government to abandon its

"command and control" approach and said local authorities should be able to commission advice as and when they need it. The report also called for changes to inspections to allow local authorities and schools to get more from the process. Demos is highly critical of the large number of central government advisers assigned to local authorities. It gives the example of one children's service department that had 19 separate advisers working with it on everything from Sure Start to drugs and the primary strategy (June 2007).

Central control and the terms of quality are reiterated in *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2.3), where concerned organisations 'must all cooperate and agree on the outcomes and have measurable means of judging progress.' Performance indicators judge all outcomes and an impressive and elaborate table informs me of what I need to know in order to achieve (or possibly deliver) excellent service. This is the same as a specifications list in industry. An exclusive list is limiting and exclusionary. What indicator is there for reaching potential? What indicator for doing one's best? Which one would cover comforting a child on the death of a parent? Which one covers bringing in toothbrush, paste and comb for a needy child each morning before school? Parameters are necessary in order to assure the manufacture of a jet engine but the success of teaching and learning cannot be assured in the same manner. Teachers know they never reach every child every day, that they will not succeed with every child, that they never know enough, that they cannot do better than their best and that their best is sometimes not good enough. The framework in all of these documents is a business model and sets out what it wants to 'deliver'. It states that there must be shared vision and invites local agencies to get together and create their own vision, but it will be subject to national inspections, with all the overtones as discussed above.

Conformance

Conformance is a key issue in industrial applications in order to achieve quality. The message that *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003) sends is that you can teach in a variety of ways but you need to be able to show your planning is in accordance with accepted methods and in the end it is the results that counts. If you can get them through the SATs then all you have to do is prove that you planned it properly and set the targets and achieved acceptable outcomes. It isn't quite saying, 'Do it anyway you like as long as you get the results', which is exactly what I was told in Texas when I asked permission to use a different style of teaching. Conformity has many good points; the same curriculum is accepted as relevant for our times and is the same for children moving from place to place, and children across the country should have access to all the same related services. But there are drawbacks to this type of uniformity too. The downside of conformity, as far as results are concerned, is that test results do not give the full picture of progress or achievement, and that they don't allow for the genuine exceptions. This again reflects an industrial model of quality control.

Organise the curriculum according to individual strengths etc but "in the knowledge of good practice and of what delivers results. (*Excellence and Enjoyment*, 2003, 1.14.)

Conformity is more pernicious when it applies to what the government produces as evidence. The documents do not always take into account contrary evidence (National Union of Teachers; response to Department for Education and Skills (DfES), *Excellence and Enjoyment*, 2003). The research that proved lecture style teaching promoted better results for instance was fully quoted; the research against phonics teaching was not.

Total Quality Management

TQM is implied by the constant repetition of 'continuing improvement involving the whole school and community' in conjunction with 'the improvement being measurable' in results and in line with the effectiveness movement. The expansion of the idea that quality is everybody's job is certainly in all these documents, and rightly so. Excellence, it is claimed, is highly likely only when we have the two correct ingredients. These are laid down as excellence in teaching (meaning getting the results) and enjoyment in learning (which means having the children engaged). The idea of teamwork making for excellence permeates through both *Excellence and Enjoyment* and *Every Child Matters* but it is as always overshadowed by the threat of getting results. It is a threat because there is no room for genuine exceptions or alternative results which may be as valid as those accepted by the government experts. I point ahead to the teachers' conversations as examples to substantiate this claim. A one example, in Liz's conversation she talks of having many pupils who have progressed from level W (working towards 1) at KS1 to Levels 1, 2 or even level 3 at KS2 for which the school gets no improvement ratings since Level 4 is what is expected. There are also fruits of getting good results, but they will be there for teachers themselves to acknowledge. They will know and will communicate to their pupils the progress made regardless of national results. As in Liz's example, the results may well be deemed failure by the accepted standards set.

This is again directly taken from the product-based idea that it is the end result that matters. If the child fails or the student is unemployable (by the government's definition) then the process has failed. But we know rationally that this argument does not hold. There are other views of education in which test results and failures are not the entire picture. There are teachers who believe that education is the whole process from birth to death, not just the end product of selected school years. The products, exam results, degrees, jobs, are deemed a necessary part of the school process but they cannot

claim to be a necessary part of human success or happiness. The stories told by the teachers tell me that teachers have played an influential part in their lives. The 'product' was less important than a person or a process.

The 'ownership of targets' (*Excellence and Enjoyment* 2.22) relates both to TQM and excellence. I highly commend the idea of charting progress from where a child starts rather than from an arbitrary 'norm'. But it is hardly a revolutionary idea to teachers or parents. To expect each cohort (of the army?) to supersede the previous one is not asking for improvement or progress; it is asking for genetic engineering. How can this year, that has fewer in it – fewer able children, fewer well-behaved children, fewer parents supporting their children in school, fewer who partake in extra curricular activities – be expected to supersede the last? As Denise asks in her conversation (Chapter 4), "Are we in the business of teaching ducks to dance?"

Excellence

We have an entire document dedicated to this idea but it is not very illuminating beyond the overstated case of getting higher percentages to a higher level each year. However, leadership is seen as key, and empowerment of those at the workplace is recognised. These are concepts taken directly from *In Search of Excellence* (Peters, 1982) in management processes. Whether they transfer directly to children in schools is not made clear. The manner in which this empowerment for teachers is supposed to work is as follows:

Teachers have much more freedom than they often realise to design the timetable and decide what and how to teach. (Executive Summary of *Excellence and Enjoyment*, 2003, p 4.)

Evidence from the conversations in the following chapter will tell otherwise. The fear of Ofsted's approval of their plans, the children's exercise books, and the lesson evaluations gave them little sense of freedom. On the contrary, the feeling of enormous

constraint left Emily, one of my colleagues who was teaching emotionally disturbed children in a special school at the time of our conversation, feeling “strangled by the requirements” in her dealings with special educational needs. She wanted to work with one child using music as a means of communicating, but the head of the school claimed there wasn’t time for music and it wasn’t part of the curriculum.

And how can we all be outstanding? Stories of extraordinary schools (1.8) are related and excellent schools admitted to, but can we all be like that? As Hall says,

It is a relatively harmless and benign policy ambition that every primary school should be outstanding. But it is also meaningless. (Hall, 2005, p 4.)

In the pursuit of excellence (2.12) we have to drill for the basics because that is how the least able have done better in the tests. It is also stated as a moral obligation (2.20). Head teachers tried to persuade the government that to expect 85% of all 11 year olds to achieve level 4 is unrealistic, especially when it is 85% in each school. In a small school where there are only 4 pupils taking the SATs at KS2, one pupil represents 25% of the population. The government replied that it is morally and educationally right to set this target, statistics have proved it. This belief that statistics don’t lie is straight out of Juran’s book. It is appropriate for manufactured products but is only fractionally appropriate for complex and contradictory human beings.

Hartley sees a contradiction not in terms of academic achievement but in terms of the ‘two gods’ that this society is trying to placate, one being the producer ethic and the other the consumer ethic. Hartley’s article (2006) suggests that excellence is to be understood in terms of the producer ethic of our times, and that enjoyment is to be understood with the consumer ethic in mind. As he writes in the abstract, “The former enables the capital accumulation process within a social-democratic welfare state; the latter justifies the policies of accumulation.” The manipulation of concepts to justify policies is apparent in terms like excellence and enjoyment as well as quality.

Excellence is again seen in the correlation between success at level 4 at KS2 and 5 GCSE passes at grades A*- C., as the following extract shows:

Achieving Level 4 at the end of primary school improves a child's prospects at secondary school and their future life chances. 70% of pupils who achieve Level 4 at Key Stage 2 go on to get five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. Of those children who did not achieve Level 4 in 1997, just 12% achieved five GCSEs at grades A*-C last summer. (*Excellence and Enjoyment*, 2003, 2.13.)

I argue that this causal connection is debatable. But if this is the *only* criterion of educational success then the cause and effect argument will hold here as effectively as it does for the relationship between better teaching and higher passing rates. How facile to say in 2.19 that those who are "just below the expected level at level 3 [need] to make just a little more progress to get them to that higher level." Are we talking about training horses to run the Grand National here? Once again I see one foot either side of the divide. Part of the business philosophy of empowerment and teamwork is proffered, but the old fashioned boss image prevails in the end.

In Chapter 3 of *Excellence and Enjoyment*, the enumerated list of principles of learning and teaching is not contentious but there seems to be no place for the unexpected, the once in a lifetime experience which is where my teachers seemed to garner some evidence of excellence. I would ask in all humility about principle number three: How do we "know what is to be learnt, how and why"? Teachers know children are different and need to have individual assessments. That is what they have been saying for many years.

In Chapter 6 (6.2) there is a list of characteristics of excellent primary school leaders:

High expectations

Professional expertise and self-confidence

Being systematic and rigorous in using evidence to inform teaching and target setting

Running the school as a learning community.

Here is yet another checklist which is very business-like. Elsewhere in the document heads are advised to be more self confident and less 'complying'. Does that mean they can ignore this checklist? Chapter 6 is also a bit confused in that in order to pursue excellence, schools are praised for using non-qualified teaching assistants to give the teacher more non-contact time. This seems to have missed the point about the relationship between teacher and learner.

Such advice and praise is condescending, patronising and does not inform on its own criteria of well-evidenced research. Most importantly the role of professional judgement is diminished rather than enhanced in the way one would have hoped for from documents with these titles. The voice of these documents is that of a mahout sitting on top of an elephant, alternatively prodding with a stick to hurry it up, poking it to set the course straight or rubbing its ears and patting affectionately fairly often to make sure it does as it is told.

This chapter details my review of some definitions and interventions proposing quality that have been important to my colleagues and me. These ideas and arguments for and against the definitions and proposals have influenced and advanced my thesis. The next chapter gives voice to practising teachers' ideas on quality and excellence in education.

CHAPTER 4

CONVERSATIONS: teachers talking

This chapter is written as a further explanation of part of the methodology and as a description of the analysis of the conversations themselves. It will be in four parts. The first section is concerned with the defence of the methodology; the second section explains the analysis of the recorded conversations while the third part investigates the choice of metaphors and their possible interpretation. The last part of this chapter briefly examines the stories related in the conversations and their role in understanding concepts. The philosophical discussion generated by the conversations is taken up in the following chapter where I engage with selected philosophers and is further detailed in the dialogues in Chapter 6.

Methodology

Referring to the overarching methodology in Chapter 2, I suggest there that conversations are an integral part of philosophy and support that claim with examples from Socrates and Plato in the ancient world, Heidegger in the 20th century and Joseph Dunne (1993), Stephen Law (2003) and Mary Midgley (2005) in contemporary philosophy. I would like to expand the idea of the importance of conversation and claim that even when philosophy is not written in the form of either conversation or dialogue it is in fact the structure of conversation that underlies philosophical discussion. I mean to include discussion in texts and in oral exchanges. This thesis itself is intended to be read as such a conversation.

Dunne writes of his book *Back To the Rough Ground* (1993): “What is carried on in this book is a philosophical conversation...” He expounds very clearly that the entire book

consists in a conversation that he orchestrates between himself, modern philosophers and Aristotle:

...my whole strategy...is to engage a number of philosophers as partners in a conversation...I do intend 'conversation' to be taken in a serious and substantial sense... (Dunne, 1993, p 20).

Dunne writes of his understanding of conversation and philosophy and since this reflects exactly what I intend in both my engagement with the philosophers' texts and with the transcripts of conversations with my teacher colleagues, I quote the following paragraph in full:

Since the work is conceived as a conversation, each philosopher must be allowed to speak in his or her own voice...and at the same time made to speak to a common issue or theme. My own obviously privileged partnership in the conversation carries the responsibility of ensuring that... the voice of none of them is distorted or falsified, while at the same time each one is disciplined by the conversation itself (so that no over concern to present the full doctrine of any one thinker should overthrow the common theme), I need to clarify what 'discipline' means here, however. For while conversation certainly entails selection and direction, there is still expansiveness about it which means that no one is really on a tight leash. When it is properly conducted it actually conducts itself; it comes to have a life of its own and to carry the partners along in its movement...when viewpoints are brought together in conversation then, like the rubbing together of fire sticks (to use Plato's image, Republic, 345a), they can sometimes produce the illuminative spark that no one of them can quite produce on its own. (Dunne, 1993, pp 20-21.)

The results of my conversations with fellow teachers (and with the texts that I chose) have certainly sparked some new ideas which I would not have arrived at on my own. The teachers and I have been actively engaged in thinking and reflecting and influencing each other as we have progressed. It is also, as Dunne states, my responsibility to ensure that their voices are heard without distortion or falsification. I take this issue very seriously indeed. I hope to show in this chapter what each teacher contributed through our conversation to the theme of quality in education. I am fully aware that prejudice is 'inescapable' as Dunne explains (p 25) but within the boundaries of my interpretations I

remain true to the words of the recorded conversations. For this particular argument I want to say that the dialectical nature of the arguments that I analyse in these conversations and the subsequent discussion in the dialogues is the same kind of philosophy that Dunne defends in his work. This justification of the dialectical nature is, as he writes,

...not indeed a justification with reference to an external criterion, but shows only that one's inquiry is taking responsibility for itself: it has made its own implicit procedure a theme for explicit reflection. (Dunne, 1993, p 26.)

Philosophy is not a linear activity, though it may well be deductive, at times employing logic in its arguments. But it is primarily an activity of putting forth ideas, holding them up for arguments through discussion and proceeding either with some working explanation for the time being or to some other question that it is found needs to be attended to before we can resolve the one with which we started. Conversations quite rightly travel in many directions; sometimes they come back to the original point but other times they lead to something more interesting to discuss and proceed along with it. This putting up of ideas, discussing them and then going off to other points before (sometimes) returning to the original idea in question is the structure of Plato's writing, where for the first time we see that conversation is ideal for both philosophy and teaching. It is certainly the format of most philosophy lectures that I have attended, most research seminars and without exception all philosophical discussions. If ideas are not subjected to this format of discussion then it is exposition of philosophy rather than doing philosophy. There is a similar difference between reading about teaching and teaching. Teaching is a two way process with learners and teachers; doing philosophy is a two way process with voices arguing at every turn. This is what Hogan and Smith call practical philosophy. (Hogan and Smith, 2005, pp 165-180.)

To discover what we think about certain ideas we need to talk or write about them, so that they can become clearer, or more puzzling, and we can share agreements and agree to differ or simply differ and go our separate ways. Doing philosophy is investigating

what we mean, what we intend, what we believe, what we know. The greats are named thus because they moved our thinking on in ways that we had not thought possible. Just as the great physicists or mathematicians have taken us beyond what were the boundaries of knowledge, so great philosophers have given us new ways of thinking about ideas, particularly the ideas that are named as essentially contested concepts (Gallie, 1956) such as education, justice, power, liberty and so forth.

There is a philosophy of every known subject that has been categorised. This is the study that grapples with the nature of the discipline and how it can be or should be interpreted or taught or believed. This part of each discipline is similarly a rubbing up of ideas against each other and against the discipline itself. These ideas are discussed by Dewey in *Democracy and Education* (1916). In my use of conversations I have ‘rubbed up’ experience in teaching against philosophical ideas about education. The insights gained from these conversations have clarified, and sometimes puzzled, all of us taking part and have furthered our thinking as to what we mean by education, by good practice, by excellence and by quality. We were doing philosophy in the most practical and basic way. It is not the great stuff that Kant or Locke produced. It is the ordinary everyday philosophy that is a reflective human activity.

So I am not claiming to be doing something out of the ordinary in these conversations; but I am claiming that conversations are a means of elucidating for ourselves and others what we mean by certain ideas, practices and concepts. It is not idle chatter because we are seriously attempting to explain not only what we mean by certain concepts but also why we understand them as we do and for what reason we believe they are important. I have indicated in the methodology chapter that these conversations present a unique opportunity not only for my colleagues and myself to gain insights into our thinking that would otherwise not have happened, but also for other researchers to gain from the knowledge and experience of practising teachers, both newly qualified and those in leadership positions. This research could be useful to research in educational policy, in

teacher education and indeed to anyone grappling with the slippery notion of quality and excellence in education.

I am using conversations in a similar way to Simone Galea (2002), who, in her PhD thesis *Symbolising the Maternal*, states that her theoretical framework of a Foucauldian genealogy entwined with Irigaray's interpretations of women's own symbolisation of themselves is "directed by the conversations of eleven women teachers about mothering and teaching." Her philosophical thesis is powered by the interpretations of the conversations, and the role they play in the participants understanding themselves. Our theses are similar in the understanding of the importance of the role of conversation. My thesis is attempting to clarify a philosophical concept using the stories related in the conversations to understand their practical and theoretical implications.

Conversations are the most appropriate format for discussing ideas with teaching colleagues. It is what we do. It is how we attack or defend new ideas. It is a practical method that is not forbidding in the sense in that it is between friends, but it is more demanding in the sense that we could not totally prepare for it. Philosophical discussion has as its hallmark, "Yes, but on the other hand..." For as interesting as our times were in conversation, we never resolved issues decisively, but we often came up with new ideas that led us to think on, or think more, or think differently. I feel that I have grappled with difficult ideas with the help of these conversations.

But doing philosophy is also, again as Dunne points out, 'surrendering to it' (Dunne, 1993, p 21). Although we can dictate the themes of the conversation, the themes of the conversations themselves become transformed by the act of discussion. The themes of quality in education and excellence in teaching were the focus of the conversations I have transcribed. From the language used and the stories told, the value of education, its purpose, its aim and much about the method and the practice of teaching were underlying all that was said, shaping the meaning of what was intended and transforming our thinking about these fundamental concepts at every turn. I continued in

my research after having transcribed the conversations by writing a set of imaginary dialogues which will be the subject of Chapter 6. In these dialogues I examine these fundamental concepts of education in detail and in the process understand some of the benefits, not only of conversations, but also of a self-study in the process of philosophy (Loughran and Russell, 1996).

As a research method (Lincoln and Denzin, 2000) conversations are respected because each conversation can be probed and conducted differently. What I am interested in is the individuality of interpretation: the words, metaphors and examples that teachers used in their conversations with me. But in casting the net wide (asking varied questions rather than the same) and enjoying the process of conversing with each one, and by examining the transcripts, my own thoughts as well as those of my teaching colleagues come under greater scrutiny. The changes in thinking I have experienced are an important part of the conversations. I am open to and expecting to be influenced by each different conversation as it happens.

I am also aware that it might seem as though my participants were chosen because they were likely to take standpoints similar to mine, and that for this reason the results of my research may be challenged. I claim throughout my thesis that I am not writing about a *sample* of teachers. I am not writing *for* teachers or *about* them in the sense of collecting data about them. I am doing philosophy, not social science; and because this is philosophy I could be sitting alone and writing my thoughts. But I am not. I have chosen to be more interactive, more conversational, and to show that teachers' voices give a perspective that ordinarily would not be available in other research forms. It is very important to emphasise that I do not consider the selection of teachers to be a sample, any more than Dunne's selection of philosophers is to be considered a sample. Who else would Dunne choose but the most appropriate thinkers for his particular theme? He quotes Aristotle as telling us to put the search for truth above friendship, but also quotes Plato, (*Seventh Letter* 344b), who explains that through "*benevolent* disputation" friendship can be a help, not a hindrance:

I make a clean breast of the fact that all the philosophers who feature in this work are ones whom I deeply admire and have found over many years to be most profitable companions. (Dunne, 1993, p 24.)

I would certainly make the same claim for my teacher colleagues. Who else would I chose to discuss and reflect upon these issues that relate both to classroom practice and to philosophy of education? And in defence of the cosiness of choosing to work with my colleagues I argue that they cover a range and variety of experience. They are from two very different countries, the UK and the USA, different cultures and different schools systems. They are young and older, inexperienced and mature in their practice, male and female and from very different sizes of schools. Most are in the primary sector, some are in secondary schools and others are working at university level; most are classroom teachers in state schools and all are teachers in one sense or another. (The full description is given in Appendix A.) Nevertheless, one cannot choose good conversationalists by demographics. My participants chose themselves by their interest and enthusiasm. We do not all think alike, and each has their own unique story to tell. These considerations, interesting though they are, are not essential to this research, since the research is not disciplined by sampling or interviews; nor are my results those of analyses of their views or of their discourse. This thesis is truly a philosophical enquiry informed by the process of conversations and analysis.

Recorded Conversations

My interest in my friends and their schools in the UK continued after I moved to live and teach in Texas. It was a particularly strong attachment since we had formed an association of the six local rural schools and had worked together sharing talents and resources. This federation of small schools was the forum for conversations amongst my peers when I was head teacher at the Hendreds School in Oxfordshire. It created a pathway for the lifeblood of our continuing professional development. We talked about what new legislation might mean to us, what we thought about it and how we might

implement it. It is what prevented our isolation and it gave us mutual respect as well as reinforcing our friendships.

These rural schools in 1987 had about 100 pupils or fewer (one school, by far the smallest, had 17 on roll and is now closed), with a staff of between two and five teachers. We had started the first pilot group for Key Stage 1 and were dealing with issues of Local Management of Schools. In contrast, my first school in Texas had 980 pupils aged from 4-11, and more than 80 teachers as well as other staff members. It already had state-wide testing, standardised teacher evaluation and payments for schools based on test results. My concept of education was put to the test in these very different circumstances, so the support and encouragement of former colleagues kept me focused on what I saw as educationally important. This enabled me to teach in the classroom without compromise and yet adapt where necessary to a system that seemed to be based on ideals of education that were entirely different from my own. Because of conversations with colleagues in the USA, I learned that many teachers had similar experiences to mine and by the time of the recordings in 2002 and 2003 their concerns are not much different from those in the UK. The conversations that were recorded in both continents were but single instances of many that preceded and followed. When I decided to undertake this research after I retired from teaching, I continued meeting and talking with my friends. The arrangements were made with each to record one session for forty-five minutes, but for many of those whose transcripts I have used, the conversations are still on going.

I requested from each person permission to tape record our conversation and permission to use their words after transcription. I transcribed each conversation and sent the transcript to each for editing. I made it clear that this was not a linguistic transcription and that I was keen for them to change what they had said if they wanted to or add or delete as they wished. There were follow up conversations that were not recorded and there were many e-mails and telephone calls too. Most of the changes were insignificant in terms of the ideas posited and thoughts argued for or against. The rewritten transcript

was then sent to each person for final agreement. These conversation tapes, original transcripts and final documents are all available as part of my research. I have summarised each conversation in Appendix A and I have included two full transcripts.

These recordings were arranged with teachers at their convenience. The presence of the machine was clearly discussed, as were the arrangements for editing the transcripts. It is immaterial to this research whether the machine influenced my colleagues or not. This thesis is not a report of others' ideas. It is a report on my discussions and what I think about quality. The transcripts reveal talking at a level where probing was relevant both by myself and by the other person too, and not felt to be threatening even when in the end the response was, "I just don't know" or "I can't put it into words." The conversations, and particularly the ones that I followed up, were instrumental in bringing about changes in my thinking.

I started each conversation with a request that the participant would tell me about their present concerns in education. It was difficult to halt this powerful flow, but I would follow up with a question such as "Well, what do you think a good education or a quality education would be like?" The words were not identical each time. This was where there were pauses, sometimes long pauses. Then there were halting phrases or descriptions and often examples of work, descriptions of teachers or incidents. Many said, "I can tell you a story." The conversations differed depending on what had been said, but many of them discussed size of school without prompting and as I was interested in this aspect too, I usually finished with asking for a comment on this issue if it had not come up.

The transcripts reveal typical conversations which I could not distinguish from other, unrecorded, conversations we have had that were similar in their tone or flow, other than that this time we knew we would be talking about quality and what it might mean. Each of the colleagues that I approached with the idea of recording for purposes of my research expressed concern that they might not have much to say. But that was not the

case once we got talking about current concerns in school. I had permission to use their own names and schools except for one teacher who requested anonymity.

The recorded conversations took place in England in 2002 and in Texas, USA, in 2003. I arranged a series of meetings when I was in each location. I met teachers in school after hours, or at their homes, or at my place of residence. A few other conversations were added with those colleagues I could not meet at the proposed time, and follow up conversations over the period 2003-2007. I returned several times to discuss quality issues with particular colleagues Viv, Liz, Tina, Tony, Kerry, Alison, Michelle, Frankie, Margaret and Michael, but I did not record these conversations though I made some notes. All this may seem casual but I stress that the importance of the conversations is that they assisted me to form ideas about quality and not that they are a report on teachers' responses to questions concerning the concept of quality.

The importance of other people's views, though, is not to be underestimated. It is through conversing, including thinking aloud, arguing and discussing, that ideas are seriously questioned and thought through in relation to other concepts. Education as well as quality had to be considered both together and separately before we could approach what we might mean by quality in education. If I had not had the generous co-operation of my colleagues I could not have furthered my own thinking in quite the same way, nor could I have written the dialogues which were most instrumental in helping me arrive at my proposed theory. The conversations are an elemental part of this thesis; they are part of the philosophy and they are the teachers talking.

The process of recording and transcribing and editing the conversations developed into further comments and clarifications. It is another indication of the power of the conversational style that having the time to think about what each person said in the course of the conversation called forth more comment. The mix of off-the-cuff and reflective comments allowed for a deeper understanding of the concepts under discussion. The conversations were intense, so the review and editing was a welcome

addition for all participants. This freedom to change and comment was important in allowing voices to be heard, firstly because they responded spontaneously, but secondly because they thought about what was being said and then responded. Teachers were given the space and time to be heard both as they actually spoke, but also as they reflected and changed, if they wanted to.

It is understood among my colleagues that we often responded with emotion and not much thought to the slew of new procedures and practices required of us over these past fifteen years or more. To have time to debate them in a friendly and interesting way has called forth such comments as “We should do this more often” (Liz). and, “I never realised that I had such strong views about teaching” (Cassandra). When we allow ourselves to think and debate and discuss we do clarify our own thoughts, and we often realise that there is good reason for an emotional response. Much more disciplined and deep are our responses when we do this thinking as part of a conversation, when two or more are questioning and probing in equal measure. As I wrote earlier, to have Roy Corden take the role of Devil’s advocate in all my educational arguments made me sharper and more disciplined than I could have been without his help.

Conversation is the most fundamental communication. In conversation among friends we are relaxed in terms of how we express ourselves, how we allow ourselves to think as we go along and change our minds if we are persuaded to. We change the subject or go off on a tangent. We tend to be freer with our expressions using slang, fashionable in-words, new words and metaphors that quickly or easily spring to mind. It was the metaphors that provided further interest in analysing these conversations. The frequency of metaphorical language led to a fruitful, unanticipated angle in this research, thus giving an example of the creativity occurring in conversations. This particular use of language allowed me to understand the underlying philosophy of education of each teacher without ever asking such a direct question.

The analysis that I did of all the conversations was threefold:

1. I summarised each conversation, and these summaries are included in Appendix A. The summary represents a brief background, present concerns for education, ideas on quality/excellence noting metaphors and stories and thoughts on size of school.
2. I then listed all the metaphors used. I categorised two types of metaphors: those that were from the business or industrial model and those that were not. I used this categorisation to make links between superficial metaphoric language and the more deliberate choice of metaphors.
3. I noted the stories or incidents that they each told. The stories resisted categorisation but in them I found compelling evidence of principled action.

Hence in the next section I examine first the use of metaphor, looking at theory of metaphor and how it assists me in interpreting and understanding the specific metaphors used in the conversations. The section following will examine the stories and very briefly the role they play in our human culture and education, and how they are important to understanding quality and excellence in education

Metaphors

Metaphors reveal both obvious and subtle insights into underlying assumptions, or unarticulated meanings (Lakoff, 1980; Wallace, 2001). I found that there was a consistent and inconsistent classification which in some ways paralleled the lines of the obvious/subtle classification. The initial list that I made revealed a consistency in metaphors when quality in education was being discussed. For many people, education was consistently described in terms of buildings and structures and this gave me an insight into how they thought of educational concepts: how they fitted into the structure. Those who used metaphors of structures, of foundations, of steps, and windows suggested education was something that was 'built' for us, sometimes by ourselves, but more generally by others, which we used as we saw fit. Others used metaphors that were consistently about growth, revealing that their concepts were perceived in a more

living, organic way. Metaphors of growth and achieving new heights, reaching for the sky, broadening horizons, were a marker of a speaker who believed education was as open as the sky itself, and was what one made of it. I could not have culled this information as easily in any other form than conversation where such openness is not only possible but desirable. Metaphors reveal value judgements. As Wallace (2001) writes,

Metaphors not only seek to illuminate the thing described - be it school, the curriculum, or the process of education itself - but they also throw light on '*how we conceive of it*,' a concept which includes implicit value judgements. (Wallace, 2000, p 7.)

Many conversations did continue and the use of metaphors was referred to. Liz tells me that she remembered when we last talked about using the word 'product.' She had found a new meaning for it. Viv could not bear to use the word 'delivery' and we further discussed this metaphor. Metaphors revealed the speaker's fundamental view of education by these deliberate choices, or rejections, of metaphor.

But then I also found inconsistencies when teachers spoke in commonplace terms of their concerns in education. I contend that these commonplace metaphors have become embedded in ordinary language, including educational language. These latter, I argue, are not a deliberate choice arising from personal view or experience, but the accepted language of our time, and these metaphors come to mind readily because they are the regular parlance of the day. Hence the obvious/ subtle discrepancy which is similar to my classification of consistent/inconsistent. I turn now to look at this dual role of metaphors in more detail.

Under the heading 'metaphors of education', Wallace (2000, p7) directs the reader to several authors and their metaphors, namely: Friere's 'banking', Bowring-Carr's 'delivering the curriculum' and Hill and Spence who praise the consumer metaphor whilst Goens' 'soul of education' leads to theological rather than business metaphors.

These writings underscore my own claims about the role of metaphor in revealing significant overt and hidden assumptions or expectations. "Metaphors are rarely chosen, nor is the significance of their inherent symbolism clearly understood." (Beare et al, 1989, p 188) Writers such as Hill and Spence (1998) claim that the use of certain metaphors does carry weight concerning values or purposes. It is this dual role of metaphor (Wallace, 2001) which I am now looking at. 1. We use metaphors without deliberately choosing them, but that choice reflects our attachment to them. The metaphors the teachers used about education are the consistent ones. 2. The choice of metaphor is an influential factor in the message relayed. These are the metaphors of the present day language of policy and literature about education which the teachers used to describe their concerns.

In my analysis I found two types of metaphors, which suggests a significant inconsistency. The metaphors when describing teachers' concerns with the existing system were clearly those of the policy documents and nearly all teachers used the same terms: goals, targets, and achievement levels. When the teachers' views on quality in education and of excellence were being conveyed the metaphors were inconsistent with the above and were of a different nature, and not all the same: the buzz, the magic, taking flight. Are these disjunctions the result of deliberate or embedded choices? I cannot make any empirical claims in answer to this question but I make the following observations. The metaphors that are in the government documents are the metaphors that the teachers used to discuss their grievances with the system. These metaphors reveal the underlying philosophy, not of the teachers, but of the government. I claim that the dominance of this usage in everyday speech illustrates how successful the change in language has been in effecting a change in thinking. The metaphors are not only prevalent; they are exclusive. This is not surprising, since teachers have had to accommodate metaphors in order to speak about education. This accommodation is a mark of the success of the changes and of the influence and dominance of one set of values. Though I claim that the metaphors reflect the underlying philosophy of the writers of the policy documents, I am also claiming that although teachers used them

they were not thereby revealing their underlying philosophy of education. The deliberate choice of words (and metaphors) in government documents is not the deliberate choice of the teachers. It is because of the ubiquitous usage of certain metaphors that individual thinking may have been displaced. What is clear is that the language has changed, and the prevailing metaphors are part of the normal discourse of education.

The most revealing aspect of this argument was that when we were discussing teachers' concerns in England and the USA, the language of industry, commerce or business (all enterprises that are affected by quality standards in a technical sense) was very evident. These metaphoric words or phrases were used in the part of the conversation where we discussed our present concerns for education. Viv's phrase, 'a formula-bound, product based idea of education as a commodity,' gives the thrust of what many felt about the lack of depth to the curriculum and to teaching methods. Most of the metaphors used by teachers in England indicated technical language directly from the government publications:

'achievement levels', 'cohorts of pupils', 'target setting', 'pre-set goals', 'inflexible structure', 'benchmark', 'delivery of lessons', 'time audit', 'education or children as products', 'bolt-on courses', 'results used as bully tactics', 'parents are customers', 'funding or inspection regime', 'the bottom line', 'teachers like automatons', 'buying in to ideas', 'cranking up a notch', 'tinkering around with results', 'a factory model', 'mechanistic system of learning', 'factory model of schools', 'a business head', 'warehousing our children.'

The underlying philosophy is clearly interpreted as technical and mechanistic. These are all examples from teachers talking about their concerns. The ready use of such words indicates, at the least, that they are part of the everyday vocabulary of teaching and have become part of the language necessary to discuss what is happening at present.

These examples, which do not comprise an exhaustive list, were part of the ordinary language that my conversationalists used. The examples selected are those that were readily used by many, rather than each being an isolated example from one person. Few

other words can be used for levels, targets or goals because of the way that policy documents are written, and in this sense it is difficult to talk about education without using technical words. Under the category that I made relating to 'my teachers' concerns in education', I also find that numeric references are very precise: '4.2 terms' or '3.9 years'. There are percentages in every transcript. This indicates a move to technical and precise language format. There is evidence of how the language of the documents has become part of what ordinary teachers now use. It is because there is no other way to talk about it. As Pring (2004) writes, there is a "bewitchment of intelligence by language carelessly used" (p3). It is difficult to avoid using the language frameworks of the policies, including their metaphors, because the concerns we have are with those very policies. There is danger here:

'Reforms' whose declared intention included blowing away the jargon of the producer culture have spawned a culture of solid jargon: Key Stage this and that, benchmarking, target setting, SATs. Might it be that there are things that cannot be said in this kind of language, and that they therefore cannot be thought? Might there, then, be matters (ideas, intuitions, feelings) in education to which increasingly we *cannot do justice* – cases where those of us who will not speak, exclusively, the new, approved language risk being, as Lyotard (1998) puts it, 'divested of the means to argue'? (Smith, 2001, p 1.)

Indeed the teachers argued in a very different language when we discussed their ideas on quality and excellence. These discussions revealed different metaphors; metaphors that I claim they chose deliberately, or if they were indeed embedded the metaphors came from their different backgrounds, from their own sets of values. We are each part of the time we live in and the result of the education we had, hence many of the metaphors are embedded in ways that we perhaps do not always reflect on. But the manner in which the teachers hesitated and struggled to speak about excellence indicates that their thinking was reflective rather than off-the-cuff.

As Wallace (2001) summarises, there is metaphor used which may express values; these values may be different from those articulated; and “metaphors used by an organizational leader to describe their organization may significantly shape organizational culture and ethos.” (Wallace, 2001, p 9) This point is demonstrated in the transcripts. The value that the government places on education is expressed in terms of results that are numeric, that can be traced, that can be rectified by intervention and that can be used to prove the efficiency and/or effectiveness of one school over another. These numeric values are talked about and referred to, and the metaphors are indeed the metaphors of the documents. They are not necessarily the metaphors of choice of the speakers. They are however, the metaphors of their organisational leaders.

Wallace’s paper gave a glimpse into the use of metaphors by a group of educational leaders and how their metaphors did *not* reflect their voiced expectations but reflected an ethos which prevailed and which was identifiable in the outcome of students’ choices. These instances of teachers’ use of metaphors being at variance with their articulated views are supported by the content of my conversations. “The constant use of a coherent and cohesive set of metaphors will influence both thinking and action” (Wallace, 2001, p 14).

If the metaphors of business are used enough and publicized sufficiently they will become part of ordinary use. In fact, many of my conversations with teachers show that this stage has already been reached. We are influenced by our own education and experiences, and my personal response is defended by the openness and encouragement to criticize and debate which has been part of my education. It is because of this that I can perceive the problem in promoting a carefully defined and highly effective education system.

I have argued so far that we all use metaphors in consistent and inconsistent ways, giving insight to both prevalent values and deeper held embedded values. Government policy documents leave us in no doubt what the underlying value system of education in

present-day England is. The success of the metaphors in becoming a part of the every day language of education shows the persuasive and powerful authority of the state. The personal and hesitant metaphors give insight into the reflective thinking of the teachers showing their commitment to different values in education. I continue now to examine Lakoff's work, (1980) on metaphor to support and further these arguments.

Lakoff (1980) argues that metaphors rise out of our experiences, but our experiences can be directed by the metaphors that prevail in our culture. If we do not examine and voice our concerns about what we mean by quality in education, then quality will come to mean what the policy makers say it is. Part of the job of philosophy is to keep open the debatable concepts and this research attempts to give teachers a voice to speak their concerns.

Lakoff's theory concerning what he calls structural metaphors (p 65) examines LABOR IS A RESOURCE and TIME IS A RESOURCE. His breakdown of how these are grounded in our experience gives another insight into why these particular metaphors are inappropriate or misleading when applied to education. According to Lakoff, the 'perfect model' of such metaphors is an industrial one:

The perfect model of this is the assembly line, where the raw material comes in at one end, labour is performed in progressive stages, whose duration is fixed by the speed of the line itself, and products come out at the other end. (Lakoff, 1980, p 66).

The acceptance of the product metaphor in education carries with it all of these implications. Teachers talking of "poor material" (Michelle) or "raw material" (Kathy and Marilyn) reveal part of this underlying idea that schooling is a manufacturing process wherein teachers "work on" (Liz) "labour to make an impression", "to produce a good citizen", (Mike) so that we can be proud of "the product of our school" (Tony). These utterances may not be intended to claim that the speaker believes education is subsumed under the metaphor EDUCATION IS A PRODUCT but the use of those phrases point to the submerged metaphor having meaning. An attachment to these

phrases implies such an acceptance at least at a superficial level. So for example, when teachers talk about pupils as products they are tacitly aligning themselves with EDUCATION IS A PRODUCT rather than with EDUCATION IS A PROCESS. If EDUCATION IS A PRODUCT is part of one's metaphorical language it is an easy step to accept the metaphor EDUCATION IS A BUSINESS. I am not saying that these two metaphors about education are exclusively definitive; I use them only to suggest differences.

One very interesting remark in the second conversation with Liz was her comment that she had been thinking about using the word product, after I had questioned her understanding of it.

Liz: I looked it up in the dictionary. I found 'to bring forth' and another lovely meaning of the word was 'to yield.' So the thing about being quite happy with an industrial model, we are producing and we are looking at products. It is very creative isn't it? Yield is a lovely idea of having quantity and weight and measuring something and of growth that has come to fruition. The idea of moving forward.

Here we see her accommodating to the prevailing language. The metaphor 'child as a product' when reflected upon can produce accommodating reason. I like Liz' subversive thinking, but how many do as much? Is it hypocritical? Or is it as Liz said, 'one way of dealing with it'? When she spoke of education and more particularly of her school Liz used the metaphors of the garden and growth, and not those of an assembly line.

...a metaphor is something that frames ways of understanding. Some frames open up your world...other frames constrict your world. (Griffiths, 2003, p 86.)

Those with imagination use new metaphors that make us see things differently. If we are not open to new ways of seeing, not only our metaphors but also our understanding will become restricted. Liz gives us the example of taking on the 'new' language and making it our own, working within the restricted language but making that language meaningful in a different way. I easily misunderstood her use of the word product, but

her imaginative broadening out of the word enabled me to understand her views in a new way.

I have long been impressed by the way that metaphors can close down the imagination, especially when they are used uncritically for too long. (Griffiths, 2003, p 86.)

This is primarily my concern: that education in school will be perceived only in this business manner and much of the concept of what counts for quality or excellence will be lost.

Lakoff argues that the examples he uses are not universal metaphors,

They emerged naturally in our culture because of the way we view work, our passion for quantification, and our obsession with purposeful ends. (Lakoff, 1980, p 67.)

The metaphor reveals what is important to our culture but it also hides other aspects of work. The business metaphor reveals what is important to our present DfES but also hides what teachers know are other aspects of education.

What is hidden by the resource metaphor for labor and time is the way our concepts of labor and time affect our concept of leisure, turning it into something remarkably like labor. (Lakoff, 1980, p 67.)

Leisure becomes a resource not to be wasted but to be used wisely. Students are certainly expected to work rather than play, to use resources such as tutor contact time and student loans wisely, and see clearly the relationship between passing exams and getting a job. Education is viewed as another resource like labour and time and when this analogy is embedded into our language, it will become embedded in our culture, if it is not already.

The logic of language use (in the case of education, the language used in the documents), coupled with the logic of entailed metaphors, leads to an acceptance of the

subsumed construction of the metaphors. This explains the use of words such as 'delivery' and 'product' which occurred in nearly all the conversations. By superimposing the business model on the concept of education, we see parts that fit very nicely and so the whole concept then becomes endorsable. This not only shapes the style of language and becomes the dominant way of thinking, but also eventually shapes the very experience of education itself. Lakoff explains this as cross-metaphorical coherence by citing ARGUMENT IS WAR as an example (Lakoff, 1980, p 105). This metaphor has a whole network of coherences, in that you can win or lose an argument, shoot your opponent down, tear down the defences, defend or attack a position and so on. Once you have established a metaphor it is easy to use other coherent metaphors to support it. ARGUMENT IS WAR is easier to extend than ARGUMENT IS DISCUSSION. More importantly, it is a metaphor that has taken hold in the language such that it is not easy to promote the idea that argument is a civilised and enjoyable discussion when it is perceived as battle. The strength of the metaphors of product and delivery, just to take two examples in current education-speak, make it all the easier to extend into numbers and quantities, targets and schedules and so on. Quality can easily be redefined in quantities once the leap is made. There are 'overlapping entailments' (Lakoff, 1980, p 104), which indicate logical consequences.

The problem teachers have is that they are responsible to their employers as public servants, and when they are not encouraged to think for themselves they may easily become accustomed to the status quo and will forget to doubt, criticize or reflect. Why should they, when these very things are not foremost in the curriculum? Fortunately as yet there is no totalitarian regime that has completely silenced its dissidents. As Martha Nussbaum (1995) argues in *Cultivating Humanity*, not only is there a great need for dissenting voices but also these voices are being heard. She puts forward as an example the many cross cultural courses offered which do not adhere to the knowledge input – test – results output, of current practice in America. In Scotland the *Curriculum for Excellence* (2004) is the result of greater professional input and is interested in values, purposes and principles, as well as targets, goals and levels. My recent (July 2007)

conversation with Liz suggests that there is some movement towards heeding dissenting voices, in that she speaks of encouragement to think outside the curriculum guidelines.

In expecting conceptual changes occasioned by metaphor use Lakoff claims,

Concepts are open-ended. Metaphors ...are systematic devices for further defining a concept and for changing its range of applicability. (Lakoff, 1980, p 125.)

Further elaboration of metaphors is outlined in Lakoff's discussion of the metaphors LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART and LOVE IS A MADNESS.

Lakoff claims that there are aspects of love that are highlighted and aspects that are masked. "If those things entailed by the metaphor are for us the most important aspects of our love experience, then the metaphor can acquire the status of truth." (Lakoff, 1980, p 142.) I argue that this is exactly what occurs if we compare, for example, EDUCATION IS A JOURNEY, with EDUCATION IS A BUSINESS. Those aspects that I identify with become 'my truth', my beliefs about what education is. Where there is no alternative to EDUCATION IS A BUSINESS, those initiated into education and into the teaching profession with the dominant metaphors in place will experience education in this vein. Since "certain actions, inferences and goals are dictated by" the one metaphor but not by the other, and since the "meaning a metaphor will have for me will be partly culturally determined and partly tied to my past experiences" (Lakoff, 1980, p 144), the setting up of our state education system on the lines of business (with business metaphors used as the professional language, strongly suggests that the culture of education could indeed become a business. Both Tony and Mike, the two business people with whom I conversed, saw schooling as a business.

Mike: My analogy for a high quality education is a production line of perfect workers and at the end is a perfect product

Tony: Now if you set targets and goals and set objectives and say this is what I expect: I don't expect any part to fail in the field. As a teacher, I do expect all the children in my class to pass every single examination that they have.

Teachers did not see excellent education in this manner. For them it was thinking for themselves, as in Sue's conversation, or doing things differently, as in Frankie's example. 'Thinking for themselves' is a stated aim in *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003), which I reviewed in the last section of the literature chapter. It is part of the problem of balance between the two voices exemplified in the conversations, that is also part of the much bigger problem of balance between the authority of the state and the moral integrity of individuals. I will deal with this in more depth in the theory chapter in my discussion of moral integrity as a principle in an alternative theory of quality.

Lakoff's example of viewing a piece of art as an investment rather than something to be valued artistically has certain reverberations paralleled in education. Each view leads to altogether different understanding, action, and goals. Art has both material value and artistic significance. Similarly I would say that education has material worth, economic value in terms of a skilled workforce and a complacent citizenry, and it also has intrinsic value for itself and for individuals who will question and criticise. They should both be part of one's education. This would require the state as well as teachers to hold the tensions between authoritarianism and individualism well balanced. The business model has forced a new metaphoric conception of education:

If a new metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base our actions on, it will alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions that the system gives rise to. Much of cultural change arises from the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss of old ones. (Lakoff, 1980, p 141.)

Education does not come under Lakoff's microscope, but the above paragraph reveals how apposite his theory of metaphor is to education. The explosion of new business courses, texts and degrees, and all the accompanying new language and metaphors has spilled over in to the world of education. The prestigious MBA as the scientific study of business methods is a proper educational pursuit. Fitting education into the business ethic works in parts because schools and their administration have overlapping

entailments with business goals. If we accept that schools should be run like business then the metaphors and the reality will merge. If we do not accept that education can be so easily categorised we need to dissent. Metaphors are powerful in shaping our thinking and in influencing what we think as real:

Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will in turn reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies. (Lakoff, 1980, p 156.)

We need Socrates to come back and question everything on our behalf. We need someone with as much irritating influence and power; someone prepared to disagree and to defend our right to disagree even unto death. The power of prevailing language and prevailing methods is evidenced in all the conversations and all the schools I visited. If I compare the ethos of the small rural primary school where I was the head teacher twenty years ago and visit the same school now I find this self-fulfilling prophecy of the business metaphor. Tests and scores and relative ratings within the community are the topics of conversation in the staff room. The teachers are au fait with the National Curriculum and plan their 45-minute lessons according to the Ofsted report, *Teaching Quality; The Primary Debate* (1995) which directs their teaching style towards class instruction. Parents are treated like clients, their wishes are considered of the first importance. Children are referred to as students in cohorts and their group scores show where the extra resources are to be spent.

None of this talk was possible when my school was inspected by HMI in 1989 and given an encouraging report reflecting the high commitment of the staff, the breadth of the curriculum and the evident care and concern for each individual child's ability with a particular reference to one teacher whose reading of a story at the end of the day exemplified the outstanding relationship created between staff and pupils. "Exactly as it should be," the inspector said. (Written copies of inspection reports were not available to head teachers in 1989. These comments are from my head teacher's journal following the oral report that I was given at the end of the inspection by Elizabeth Mathews, HMI

July 1988.) The school and the teachers have changed with the times. The tradition of excellent individual care and concern continues, but only at the expense of the teachers' own time, in which after school activities, weeklong field trips and summer school make the personal contact and continuity possible that is defied by the new regime. Liz, Frankie, Sue M, Stuart, Alison, Cassandra and Hannah each claimed that out of school activities were where they got the real satisfaction from teaching.

Stuart: The bursar tells us what we can do officially. We can only do the kind of things we know are valuable after the school day is finished.

The business metaphor is the reality of school today. Those aspects that are hidden by this metaphor have to be carefully sought out and nurtured by those who believe them to be equally, if not more, important. For both Liz, who felt the curriculum had become "too mechanistic" and Stuart, who said that "creativity in all its senses was squeezed out", the explanation for their use of these words was that they felt there was a "de-skilling of the profession" (Liz) and that "professional judgement was devalued" (Stuart).

The acceptance of the metaphor, which forces us to focus *only* on those aspects of our experience that it highlights, leads us to view the entailments of the metaphor as being *true*. Such "truths" may be true, of course, only relative to the reality defined by the metaphor. (Lakoff, 1980, p 158.)

In Texas, USA, where I taught for six years in the 1990's, it was evident that the truth of the business metaphor was established beyond doubt. The teacher technician rather than the educator was an accepted status. Teachers expected to be given textbooks containing the required curriculum which clearly delineated not only the content but also the format of the lessons, including questions that it was appropriate for the teacher to ask and acceptable answers from the students. There are now many such books and packages available in our British schools. Part of my concern, stated in Chapter 1, is the ready acceptance of the authoritarian role of the state and the underlying business philosophy of education which is following in the steps of the USA.

In comparison, and highlighting my point about the dual role of metaphors, it is interesting to see what metaphors are used in the conversations about quality. We all use metaphor unconsciously and sometimes the choice reveals a tacit acceptance of the implications of the metaphor, such as the business terms now used in education. However, at other times I argue that the metaphor reveals an embedded quality, one that we really approve of. This dual role of metaphors seems to be clearly differentiated when the teachers were talking about what a quality education meant, or how we judge excellence in education.

Teachers trying to describe what they thought quality meant in education used phrases such as “you can sense it as you walk through the door” (Alison and Sara); “It’s the atmosphere” and “You know it when you see it” (Denise); “This is the place to be” (Bonny and Viv); “The ethos sensor” (David); “Something you can’t teach” (Cassandra); “It’s the buzz”(Frankie); “It’s the magic” (Denise and Hannah); “It’s electric” (Sue M.); “A blinding light” and “Creating a web of truthful relationships” (John). Many used ‘sparks’ “switched on” “turned on” “take off” and “all fired up” and some said “making their own little pathways” (Ethel, Kerry and Sue M). For Viv it was “living the curriculum. not delivering it.” For Joanne it was a “ministry.” These are the metaphors that came from part of the conversation which was about quality education or excellence. These teachers were trying to put difficult ideas into words. This was in sharp contrast to occasions when they were angry and had lots to say without drawing breath about what was wrong with education. I claim that the more reflective part of the conversation was where the deeply felt metaphors came from.

These teachers were conversing about something they found difficult to describe. I do not think this indicates that they did not know what they thought, but it does mean that they did not have an ‘off-pat’ answer. And that is what makes these responses so desirable. They reach into our deepest thinking. We have not got the language for it because it is not the current language of most educational policies or documents. There

is no jargon for what we were talking about. In our profession we as teachers are not often called upon to talk about these deeply felt issues, and our struggle to find suitable words is an indication that we are not prepared to give any old answer. What we find is the use of metaphors (and stories which I come to in the next section) help us by giving examples. In this story David and the inspector appeared to understand each other perfectly.

David: I cannot come out with words and say what it is, but here's a story. There was an inspector (here at my school) who said he couldn't put it into words either. (David waves his arms and flutters his fingers) But he has a magic wand that is an "ethos sensor". (We both laugh loudly!) He said he could tell within a very few moments what the quality of the school is going to be like. I think that can only be the case because of the quality of the people there. It is all about relationships.

This story could be construed as a joke, but the inspector was trying to put into words what this particular ethos was and how to describe it, when David had asked him what he meant. Once there is an accepted definition or a list of desirable qualities, it becomes difficult to deny the school its rating of 'excellent' if all the particulars on the list have been ticked as fulfilled; and yet, and this is quite possible, the school may not have that quality that we all seem to know about but cannot quite easily describe. So there was, I claim, something that this inspector wanted to reserve his judgement on, which was a personal intuitive response to David's school. It was the inspector using his professional judgement. This story encapsulates an unwillingness to commit to words, but also reveals that stories are sometimes the *only* way to communicate a difficult concept. The metaphors give an insight into both the language of their concerns which is straight out of the technical vocabulary, and the language of their concept of quality which is individual, deeply personal and always passionately felt, especially when they told a story.

In concluding this section on metaphors I include some of the metaphors used in conversations with comments. Liz gives credence to the idea of consistent/inconsistent metaphors when she talks readily of education as a product, and believes much of schooling should be run like a business “because we want a good result.”

Liz: There is really nothing wrong with the business model or method. I quite welcome that ...if we are seeing that the end result is what it should be. In a business or commercial institution or enterprise you would know where the strengths and the weaknesses are. If you knew that your end product was good and it was serving the public. ...you would be pleased that you had done a good job...

Then Liz tells stories about teachers who excel at all levels – teachers who “rather than give the children a good slice of bread and butter and no jam,” give them “half a slice of bread with gorgeous butter and superb jam.”

David likewise, saw little to quarrel with in the many new strategies, and endorsed most of the new business ideas as ‘highly effective’ but he also tells of the ‘ethos sensor’ when asked about quality and says,

David: I cannot come out with words and say what it is, but it has to be the quality of the people here. It is in the relationships. How can it be anything else?

And it is ‘relationships’ that becomes the metaphor for education in many conversations describing quality and excellence. For Alison an excellent school could be judged by “the relationships of the teachers with the children”. For Cassandra it was “trusting relationships”, “valuing children and their endeavours”, and for John it was “creating a web of truthful relationships.”

Emily: An excellent teacher knows her kids inside out and what sets them off, what gets them going. She really put herself in their shoes and sees the world from their point of view.

Viv: Another part of that [excellence] is that many of the people who were *best* at teaching were good at it not only because of their lively mind that I've talked about, but of their sensitivity to other human beings' reactions.

Ethel: The answer is simple – you *love* the kids. That's what it boils down to. Each relationship is different. One child you love them and you know you have to be hard on them because you know that's what they need. Another child you might allow this enormous amount of slack. What adults don't understand is that children know this intuitively so they don't feel discriminated against because children know that everyone has special needs and if they see one person's needs being met they feel their needs will be met too.

Bonny: Personal interaction between the teacher and the child is at the heart of it.

If we are searching for the vital part that my colleagues and I claim is missing in our quality controlled schools, I believe the following metaphoric words and phrases might help us. I enjoyed hearing these phrases as descriptions or explanations of excellence. I could sense the understanding. I was aware of the passion. How could concepts such as those suggested below be categorised or checklisted? How would one determine (for instance) how far children have taken flight, or what number of decibels it takes to produce a 'buzz'?

Ethel: Taking flight

David: The extra dimension and making the time to do...

Frankie: Creating new visions, going in different directions, that buzz.

John: Liberating themselves, that individual spark

Hannah: Being all fresh and bubbly, the magic

Viv: Sparking each other off

Jill: Feeling nurtured, the enthusiasm, the environment'.

Margaret: Opening their eyes

Denise: Opening the windows

Sue M: Taking their own route, the feel of the classroom

Stuart and Tina: Going beyond the classroom

Bonny: You just know it.... If a child comes running out of school and he is telling you this and this and this about school today, and he wants to take a cinnamon roll for his teacher or a flower..... There's your answer.

Following this analysis of metaphors in the conversations, I proceed now to examine the stories which were also part of each conversation. These stories challenge the existing acceptance of quality in education and as such gave me insight into a different approach.

Stories

Any 'power of abstraction' is thoroughly situated, in the lives of persons and in the culture that makes it possible. On the other hand, the world carries its own structures so that specificity always implies generality (and in this sense generality is not to be assimilated to abstraction): That is why stories can be so powerful in conveying ideas, often more so than an articulation of the idea itself. (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p 34.)

If I look back at the thirty five years that I have been involved with schools, I know that my ideas have been shaped by the conversations with my colleagues, whether they were fellow teachers, head teachers, advisers, governors or parents. I heard so many times the remark that a particular meeting or teaching course was deemed to be good simply because it gave teachers the time to talk to each other and discuss ideas and concerns. So I feel it was those conversations, which gave the opportunity to discuss the views and ideas of others along with my own, that shaped the way I changed in my thinking about the practice of teaching and the theories underlying it. It was the influence of stories told in the staff room, at meetings, at courses or simply at meals around a table that had convinced me both of the complexity of education and of the relevance of stories.

In response to my further probing about quality in the conversations, I found many of my colleagues would be stuck for words, revealed by comments such as "It is difficult to say" or "that's hard to put into words." There was not much evidence of lists, and certainly not of checklists.

The list and the bullet-point (I grow tedious about the bullet-point; but it is emblematic of so much more) have become the standard means of communication of our age, in education as elsewhere. The list combines a

number of attractions. In certain contexts it can seem to offer the possibility of breaking down overly general ideas, things which cannot be pinned down ('a good teacher') into component activities which can be specified and observed: 'selects appropriate material', 'paces the lesson suitably', and so on. The idea of a good teacher is vague, almost metaphysical, but you can *see* that she selects appropriate material. (Smith, 2001, p 11.)

Some teachers did explain what they thought the characteristics of an excellent teacher might be (Alison in conversation, for instance), but went on to say that the list could be all checked out and the teacher could be far from excellent. The transcripts revealed to me exactly what Smith continues in the same article to elaborate: that there does not seem to be a place or language for what the teachers wanted to say about the qualities that they valued in education. As Smith rightly argues, there must be a place for teachers to speak and be heard. If the language of education is relinquished to the policy makers it becomes the language of government and not the language of education. If it limits the language of teachers so that they cannot own it, then it is not about education:

The problem is the insistence on an exclusive language (inputs and outputs, target-setting, performance indicators, learning outcomes and the rest) that *do not do justice* to our – teachers' and learners' – experience of the complexity of the extraordinary business of learning. Our finer and more inspiring experiences as learners and teachers cannot be found there, and thus they are set at nought. (Smith, 2001, p 6.)

Not only did I find such struggles with language when the teachers were explaining quality, but it was noticeable that the two people who were involved in the business world had no hesitation in defining and/ or describing what they meant by quality, as the following extract from one conversation illustrates.

Tony (parent and business manager): The most important thing about quality is understanding and meeting expectations. This applies to teachers as well as anybody else. If you don't understand the expectations, if nobody ever tells teachers or managers, if nobody explains what the expectations are, then how do they know? What standards do they work to? They must end up working to their own....If you don't set standards then you are at risk of reaching your own standards and they may not be good enough.

The question about quality was addressed directly by Mike (governor, parent and business manager).

Mike: The theory is that for any product or service, Macdonald's or the aircraft industry, you could write procedures, which would be the Quality Manual. If you start here and do all these things then this is what to end up with. In our industry (aircraft components), because we are regulated, that is safety regulated, what we have to show is not that we have a detailed procedure how to do everything but that we train our people how to do these things. In general terms we say, 'If we do things like this we will end up with the product.' It isn't about inspecting the product as it goes through. It's about general principles of how he would make something.

Such straight talking is expected in industry and necessary for the aim of producing a safe and regulated product. Such language is not necessarily appropriate in education where the concepts discussed do not have set boundaries, despite efforts to make them fit. Furthermore, thoughtful exchanges are required in order to reflect on meanings so that communication, whether in conversation or in the written form, is successful.

Fielding (2001) deplores the fact that the educational world has adopted the language of 'performativity':

Too much is metallic and managerialist, too often enunciated in ways which are overbearing and overconfident in their insistence. Why is it that we have such little confidence in the capacity of the much more subtle, ethically nuanced language of education to express what is important to us as teachers and learners? Why do we feel impelled to borrow the disfiguring language of performativity, which has neither the capacity nor the inclination to articulate what matters most to us in our daily work and our enduring intentions? (Fielding, 2001, cited by Smith, 2001, pp 8-9).

What more often transpired with the teachers at the point of my probing was a story to illustrate what they were trying to put into words. Alison found it hard to say what the concept of excellence meant to her, because, as she put it, "I find this very difficult as it isn't in my nature to use the word excellent." After a long discussion on the award of excellent to some teachers at her last Ofsted, she finally said,

Alison: I have never observed a teacher who I would say is excellent although some got excellent in Ofsted, but I would say that I suppose an excellent lesson is one where the teacher is inspirational. An excellent pupil ...would be one that had both technical skill and style. And that's difficult to define exactly.

Cassandra paused for a very long time when I asked her what quality in education meant to her. She looked about and sighed and then paused again. Then, when she did speak she related this:

Cassandra: I had this teacher I worked with a lot and it didn't matter what subject it was, what time of day it was, or what time of year it was, she just had this way of motivating the children so they thought whatever she was teaching them it was the best thing in the world. It was just her persona. She had this way. She respected them as people and listened to what they had to say...She trusted them. That's what I aim for. To be able to have that sort of relationship with my class.

Cassandra's story is not simply a description as it illustrates her ideal as an example, and like Viv's example that I quote next, is as effective as a story. It is not measurable, and yields much more than a definition.

Viv: Very difficult. (Long pause.) This is very difficult to put into words. One of those things that you know it when you see it. (Pause) ... not only a lively mind...but sensitivity to other human beings' reactions. It is what is inside you that really matters... There's a difference between delivering the curriculum and *living* the curriculum (Viv's emphasis). If the teacher is living the curriculum, the child, most of the children will pick up something which is *more* valuable than simply "I got my sentence right or I got my sums right."

Other teachers were not pushed or probed at all and readily gave up stories as naturally as talking in conversation usually tends to be.

David said it plainly enough. I had not asked for a story. I had not even probed very much at this point in our conversation. We had discussed the idea of quality controls in schools and we had agreed that they were important measures for part of the idea of quality but that they missed a vital part. David said, "It is all to do with

relationships...children sense these good relationships.” Likewise Frankie launches into her story without any probing whatsoever.

Frankie: It is not just about results. Because it's to do with when you step in the door you get that buzz. We were doing the Egyptians and before we started the topic, in the corner of the classroom (Class 2) I got Roger, my husband and my son in at the weekend and we made a pyramid. It was like two corners where we used yellow sheets and some bamboo poles and turned tables up and covered the sides with paper. The idea was that the children had to invent the people for whom the pyramid had been built. They had to research what went on in Ancient Egypt and create Tourist guides. The whole thing was just magical. The whole room was different and it just took off. Because they were so inspired by it, it was an upward spiral for us all.

Stuart is hesitant when I push for more but then comes straight out with a story.

Stuart: I can't put it into words exactly, but to take an example of something we did, it was last term with Year 6. We did some work on publishing: co-ordinating pictures and writing and putting them together to make a piece. I tried to give them some help with presentation. I think what I enjoyed most and made me think I was really getting somewhere with them [was] when they said, “I've got that on my computer at home.” Several children went home and did these things. It was not homework but it was things they really wanted to do for themselves. They have brought in work that they did themselves at home. They have wanted to complete their assignments at lunchtimes and after school because they have really enjoyed doing it. They have not been frightened to ask, “Well, how do you do that?” So that would be an example of an excellent piece of learning/teaching. It's not quite finished yet because what I asked them to do was to prepare a slide presentation using nursery rhymes for the infant children. That was something that they did not know how to do, they have learned it. They have done something about it in their own time and they have involved parents too. Parents were interested in what we were doing. We were working with the children in pairs. Some of the children were able to help others and everyone got something out of it.

Tina wrote to me via e-mail some time after our conversation. She sent me a piece of artwork accompanied by a poem. This is her attachment in reply to one question from me: What do you mean by quality in education?

Tina: I would like to share a piece of work that my Year 6 children produced... We had been studying poetry in general when I introduced them to "The Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll. ... I read through the poem once and asked the children what they thought it was about. They managed to give me a very general impression of monsters etc, but nothing more concrete than that. We then went on to discuss whether there were any clues within the grammatical structure of the poem that would help us make sense of the poem. We discussed the fact that 'slithy toves' were most probably animals and that 'gyreing' and 'gimbling' must be verbs because they were being "done" etc. We also studied words that must have been adjectives and their relative positions in the sentence and the identification of nouns etc. We continued in this manner throughout the poem, and by the end the children had analysed the poem comprehensively and had learnt a lot about the grammatical structure of a sentence. However as is always the case in these situations, you can never be sure that the children have taken on board exactly what you think they have, and also whether they will retain this information. So imagine my surprise (and the tear in my eye) when I was presented with a framed copy of two of my children's interpretation of the Jabberwocky based on a lesson taught months earlier. I think you must agree that this constitutes excellence on the part of the children and also an exceptional understanding of the construction of this poem. (I have included a copy of this work in the Appendix A with Tina's summary.)

The most illuminating story of them all was in Professor Tomlinson's response to my questions about excellence in teaching or learning.

John: That's very difficult. I'm not sure that I could think of something immediately. But there is a story that I am allowed to tell and it comes from when I was CEO [in Cheshire]. There was this story about a little girl; she was about ten, I think. She went to ... a centre [Field centre] and she had a marvellous experience and she was changed by it. Part of it was that while they were working there, she and her friend found a dead frog when they were out in the fields near the centre. And the teacher noticed what they had done. What they did was to talk about it and decide what they should do. They decided to give it a decent burial and the teacher being a good teacher, which is much to your point, didn't interfere, but watched and listened. When they were all in a circle round the pond where they were sharing what they had been doing that day, the teacher asked the girls to explain what had happened to them and why they had done this. Now that led to a marvellous conversation about the nature of life and death, life after death and how one should respect the dead properly, and how we get upset at death and all that. Now this was so striking to the parents when the girl got home and told her sister all about it that they actually went to the centre and had a look round. The warden was there and he showed them around. The warden said, "This is the bed your sister had and one day you might come here."

Now it was that little girl who had had the experience with the frog, at the centre who two weeks after was found dead on the beach at Llandudno. Murdered. It was something of a cause célèbre at the time. Four years ago now? I was privileged to see the letters which the family wrote to the centre and to the school, saying how much in these desperate times, this experience that the girl had had, and the way she explained it to her younger sister and to them had helped them in this time of losing their daughter. Coming to terms with death. A spiritual experience from a physical loss. The school was wonderful, and not just that, they were a proper help to the family in the way that they could accept.

It is a most dramatic story and one of which we know the effects at a later time. Very few teachers' stories would have these hallmarks, simply because teachers rarely hear from students after they have left their class or school. But the point is extremely well made here and it stands for all those similar stories that are untold. When a teacher acts with the utmost respect for a child and takes the risk of acting according to her own moral integrity in a difficult situation (sometimes going against what the rules require), using her professional judgment, the immediate result may be obvious; but the long term effect, the importance attached to an action or explanation, may never be known except to the child. Stories like John's are more far reaching than the others I quote because we know about one of the outcomes, but many stories may be as far reaching. It is the moral element and the unknown outcomes that remain central for all. (I return to these ideas in the theory chapters 7 and 8.

Anecdotes and stories

Stories such as these cannot be dismissed as mere anecdotes, both because they reveal something deeper than the facts and because they are open to many interpretations. At this point I want to take issue with the criticism of anecdotal evidence. Anecdotes are usually brief, oral and unable to be verified. Thus they rely on the credibility of the hearers. It is unfortunate that the terms 'anecdotes' and 'stories' are used synonymously, since this association prevents the stories that are not 'mere anecdotes' from being heard and attended to, as they deserve. Anecdotes are typically ephemeral,

and although they are used to illustrate an incident or a point in some way they are capable of revealing a truth that is not obvious, or enhancing understanding of an incident or a point. They have their uses. Stories are weightier and can be recounted in any form, whether that is telling, writing, painting, acting or singing. They relate a series of real or fictional incidents and have something to tell us. There is a greater demand from the public for evidence-based research in educational matters because such research is perceived to be more scientific, more reliable than stories. There is a need and a place for both. What I would add is that it is easy on the one hand to give credibility to scientific or mathematical reports without having to think about them (because they are mathematical) and on the other to dismiss teachers' stories (and maybe anecdotes too) as being one-off examples with no scientific backing. But it is not an either/or argument that we are engaging in. In dismissing teachers' stories in favour of the scientific report, a certain something, personal and subjective, that makes the evidence creditable and interesting not to say understandable and enjoyable, is lost. The stories give us that certain something, that extra dimension. It is therefore, worth paying attention to them. We want the letter of the law, so to speak – the facts and figures of teaching and learning – but the letter of the law is not much use if we have not understood the spirit of teaching and learning, the meaning of which is embodied in the stories told about it.

I have doubts about some of the findings of evidence-based research and how they are interpreted. Clough (2002) writes of his concern that research may be set out as tables of figures and statistics, and mathematical results only are shown when the reports from which these tables were derived depended on observations, in which case there would be an element of interpretation not accounted for. This can be a distortion, an oversimplification. Such a reductionist practice obscures if not distorts the evidence. It is possible that in rendering the evidence in a strictly mathematical format both the complexity and the spirit of the observation could be lost.

One such piece of research was responsible for a huge change in the style and building of a school. The Ofsted report that Stockham School in Oxfordshire received in 2000 advised building reforms so that the school could have separate classrooms rather than flexible shared spaces. The head teacher was informed that research had 'proved' that teaching was more effective in separate closed classrooms with lecture style arrangements. The county funded the rebuilding programme. The efficiency of the teaching in the research was rated according to test results, to SATs results and to research that was nationally evidence-based. This kind of testing has a place in the school system but does not inform us of the overall quality of the teaching, or of the lasting impact of the relationships between teacher and child. Lecture style is now considered 'more appropriate' for our youngest children because the tests have proved this. Common sense, however, would indicate otherwise. This particular school had achieved outstanding results despite its open spaces, so it is difficult to understand the reasons for accepting such considerable additional expense. Not surprisingly, in the years of reconstruction and after the change in teaching style both test results and overall evaluations went down.

As part of the knowledge processing 'business', and I use the word advisedly, the evidence from evidence-based research is undisputed but I would like to argue that this evidence reveals only part of the story. The truly educational values that Hogan (1995) argues for throughout *Custody and Courtship* seems to have been by-passed. I have fears that much research is validated because of scientific format. As a teacher I know that the immediate feedback of testing does not give the whole picture. In retrospect, I wonder how much of the picture or of the story was lost with the results of the 11+ examinations. Both Slee et al (1998) and Clough (2002) express fears that somehow the point of education has been allowed to slip away:

...that the analysis ...by the effectiveness research literature, and in turn those writing Department for Employment and Education policy off the back of this research, is oversimplified, misleading and thereby educationally and politically dangerous (notwithstanding claims of honourable intent). Clough (2002. p 21.)

Teachers tell stories about this child or that incident in order to illustrate a point or support a particular point of view. This is because they use the everyday processes of their profession as they deal with it in a practical and professional way. In answer to those who criticise anecdotal evidence I would argue that stories are the base upon which we construct our experiences in our everyday work, and create a framework or a foundation upon which we eventually build our professional judgement. Marilyn Farwell (1988) would go even further than talk of these possibilities. For her, stories create the structure of our experience and of our lives.

Without a story, we perish. Stories define our lives: they teach us what is possible and good, help us set goals and limits, offer us role models and explain mysteries. Without stories – myths and legends, folktales and sacred texts, romances and comedies and tragedies – our lives would be formless. (Farwell, 1988, p 29.)

It is difficult to argue against such a claim, since how could we know whether or not she is right? If stories are what structure our lives we cannot have experience outside of them or be without them. Conversely, we cannot claim that they do not structure our lives, because we cannot imagine a life without them. The view that stories offer one way of perceiving how our lives are structured is one that I find entirely acceptable. The simple act of keeping a diary or a journal imposes structure on the remembered experiences of the day. The reflective journal informs us of our intellectual and emotional journey in such a way that we learn from it as we compose it, read it and re-read it. It is revealing and can be hurtful as well as healing. By contrast, anecdotes might be interesting asides, one off examples that illustrate a point, but stories are more aligned to exemplars than examples. I intend exemplars that give us ideals. These stories give us ideals of teachers, or learners or teaching or schools. They are not merely examples (though they are all very good examples).

Theories

In support of the notion that teachers' stories offer an alternative theory of quality I look at the work of Cortazzi (2002) who claims that teachers develop their theories from practical knowledge that is essentially 'event-based.'

It is not surprising that their [teachers'] knowledge is expressed through retelling of situations and how they have been managed or mismanaged, in other words in their own narratives, as this is the base from which their knowledge and thinking has grown. (Cortazzi, 2002, p 37.)

Jo Anne Pagano (1991) explains how teachers theorise and re-theorise by narrating what they are doing in the classroom, how they have dealt with a behaviour problem or explained why they are using this resource or that. In describing what we are doing in the classroom, by articulating a problem by dealing with a behaviour problem we are indeed theorising. I intend to theorise from the stories given to me as examples of quality or excellence.

Cortazzi (2002) credits teachers with valuable knowledge through their stories, which are recognised as a valid source of teacher perspectives about their abilities, their beliefs and their theories. 'Narrative' is perhaps a more correct term, according to Roy Corden who discussed this issue with me. He sees stories as facts that can be objective, and narratives as a telling by an individual, where one interpretation may well differ from another. I need to make it quite clear that I am interested in the theory that arises from the narratives, but my aim is not to undertake narrative theory analysis. Just as my conversations are not interviews, my use of story/narrative is not 'narrative theory.' Narrative theory has developed in the last twenty years or so into a recognised methodology for the purposes of research. The analysis of the viability and validity of narratives is well documented by Cortazzi, (2002). I rely on such validity when I invoke narratives to enrich philosophical analysis, which I use as my methodology. The theory that I propose derives from the stories and does not come as a result of narrative theory.

Kirin Narayan (1991) asks us how many different people can get personal meaning from the one story.

The answer lies in the ambiguity and multivocal form of the story; by using a story rather than a straightforward assertion Swamiji (the storyteller) allowed different people to read in their own perspectives, to engage with the text in their own way. (Narayan, 1991, p 127.)

Telling a story is often a way *not* to give an opinion, but to allow others to infer for themselves from their own experiences and knowledge what this might mean.

According to Mark Tappan (1991), “one of the functions of narrative is to hold cognition, emotion, and action together, and thereby give meaning to human experience” (p177).

Narration is seen as a means of reflecting and learning. In the usual course of a teacher’s career most theorising will arise directly from practical experience (Cortazzi, 2002). I acknowledge that interpretation can well be biased. I can find what I am looking for because I want to see it there. For this among other reasons I chose conversation with teachers with whom I had an established relationship as my research method. We are more likely to understand each other and much more likely to argue openly and not feel intimidated by misconceptions. An overt example of this comes from a recorded session in which Viv and I were discussing the love of learning. When I said it was something to do with confidence, she immediately interrupted:

Viv: I think you have twisted what I said..... I was talking about something to do with the mind and having a commitment to learning oneself....and not about confidence.

Such openness was part of our professional friendship, and very much expected and accepted.

Stories

I have always believed that stories were the basic food of a child's conceptual life. In an instinctual manner, like many parents and teachers, one tells stories to teach in a way that is more engaging for the child and more illustrative than definitions. Text stories with pictures or oral stories with actions or songs included appeal to visual, aural and kinetic modes of learning. Strickland (2001) believes stories are the way to bridge cultures, too. She argues that they are not only a useful tool in education but also a necessary one for explaining concepts, especially moral concepts, to young and old alike. Strickland contends that it is with this idea of understanding concepts, so hard to put into words, that stories and story telling come into their own: "...in traditional cultures of the world, stories have always been used to convey profound truths about the human condition..." (Strickland, 2001, p 28).

If we successfully use stories to explain to children difficult concepts that we understand, then the same will hold true for concepts that adults find difficult too. If the bridging of cultures is possible through the use of stories, then I think that using stories will at least help me to grasp and explore a difficult concept like quality. The most engaging teachers that I have known are those who have a stock of stories suitable for every occasion: a linking story to another area of study such as history or geography, a moral story for some situation that is hard to explain, a current or seasonal story, a festival, feast day or celebration story and so on. My conversationalist Viv believed it would be appropriate for stories to have an important place in teachers' lives:

Viv: I would venture to say that a good stock of stories could form the most solid basis of a teacher's professional training.

The great thing about this is that stories are easy to learn, much easier to remember than theories, and the skill of telling can be learnt if it is not a natural gift. Teachers should see themselves as storytellers since it is this skill which helps delineate the difference between flat-objective-information-giving lesson, and a lesson that comes to life.

If I tell a story and you listen, we have both shifted from an exchange based on information to a more resonant sharing through the medium of imagination. (Stickland, 2001, p 31.)

In trying to disentangle the various strands of the concept of quality I want to tell my story of how I understand education and what it is that constitutes quality. In inviting colleagues to converse with me on these ideas I am asking them to tell their stories. For many of us, working under difficult conditions, often compromising our principles around the edges, our only outlet has been to grumble collaboratively or to rejoice in finding a way through or around some of the bureaucratic demands. I feel as if I have not been able to have my say, and even if I could have found a way to do so, I doubt I could have articulated reasonably. Confusion over principles and debate over procedures left little time to reflect on how changes affected my concerns other than on a practical day-to-day basis. The enormous power and reach of individual or collective stories both in terms of understanding oneself and society at large is well documented (Witherell and Noddings, 1991).

So I am writing for myself, and I hope to allow others to be heard through my research. As Greene writes,

...persons long inarticulate are overcoming the silences by thinking and speaking in terms of story. [Stories]... give us a voice to speak of what was repressed or suppressed. [Stories are] marvellously multiple, and through them...we are invited to enter a conversation... Both in the telling and in the listening, we will be engaged and we will be in search. (Greene, 1991, p x).

In using conversations I am encouraging deeper relations with our thinking and our communication. Such experience should also bring new awareness to both parties. Witherell and Noddings (1991) are brave enough to define what it is to educate. "To educate is to take seriously both the quest for life's meaning and the meaning of individual lives", they write (p3). If we are to get to what teachers think they are striving for in their teaching roles we have to listen to their side of the conversation. Dialogue

“allows for the negotiation of meanings” (p7), and later, “The power of narrative and dialogue as contributors to reflective awareness in teachers and students is that they provide opportunities for deepened relations with others...” (Witherell and Noddings, 1991, p8).

Stories expand our horizons just as travel to a different country does. Listening to the stories of our culture enriches our lives in ways that facts about culture do not. The use of historical novels and imaginative writing in the history curriculum has a compelling force far beyond lists of dates and memorisation of important events. As Witherell and Noddings state,

[one of the] ...reasons for a prolific use of narrative in teaching...has to do with the power of story and metaphor in offering up possibilities for human action and feeling. (Witherell and Noddings, 1991, p 94.)

In understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, “it is critical we know about the person the teacher is” (Goodson, 1992, p 4). In listening and understanding teachers’ stories we get to know something of the person that cannot be gleaned from qualifications. I learn from the conversations, and particularly from the stories, what teachers have experienced and how they have thought and acted. The centrality of narrative to education from the perspective of collaborative biographers can be seen in Butt et al 1990 (p225) where it is claimed that ‘education exists in one sense, for the individual and collective life histories.’ These stories are more enlightening about the fundamental philosophy of teachers, how they view education, how they put into practice their professional judgement, than any checklist, no matter how exhaustive, could ever hope to be. Judging teachers from their stories would be in line with Cortazzi’s (2002, p 15) suggestion that we make sense “of teachers’ thoughts, actions and experience by studying the formation of their professional consciousness through their experience.”

When I attempted to categorise the stories I found underlying principles which revealed something of the person. I argue in the theory Chapters 7 and 8 that one of the underlying principles of quality is the moral commitment of the teacher. I claim that the stories related in the conversations reveal that quality called '*arete*', which I examine in Chapter 5. *Arete* meaning excellence in terms of the fulfilment of yourself, the doing of what ever you are supposed to be doing to the highest order of your ability, to be successful at whatever it is you do by attending to its moral implications and not always staying in your own comfort zone.

In this chapter I have examined the conversations, looking particularly at the metaphors and stories used and the implications these have for interpreting the underlying philosophy of education and the personal commitment of the teachers taking part. My personal perspective is both supported and challenged during these conversations. Two themes of significance emerge that are philosophical problems: the concept of excellence arising out of moral judgement, and the debate concerning the authority of the state versus the individual specifically in matters of education. I take up the ongoing conversation in the next chapter by calling on selected philosophers.

CHAPTER 5

CONVERSATIONS WITH SELECTED PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS

This chapter takes up the important educational issues highlighted by the conversations that are of philosophical interest: namely the concept of excellence and the role of the state in matters of education. Up to this point of the thesis, I have given consideration to various themes arising from manufacturing perspectives on quality: control, customers, systems, TQM and excellence. Coming through the language of policy documents is the notion that quality derives its criteria from a business-centred concept of product, sales and services. In this chapter I turn to themes arising from the teachers' conversations: the concept of excellence, the aims of education, the role of the state, the centrality of morality and the understanding of the child. I argue that inherent in the language of the conversations, and particularly in the stories, is a concept of quality which owes its allegiance to the stories and culture of classical times, when teaching was expected to be a moral commitment rather than a business enterprise. I seek to revisit and rekindle this understanding of excellence.

There are several strands to this chapter and they are interrelated. The conversations and stories gave rise to considerations of the ancient Greek concept of excellence *arete*, which I discuss first. I remark on the culture from which the concept arose, and I look briefly at the concept of wisdom and its relevance today. The purpose of investigating the philosophers I have chosen is to review a range of insights into the concept of *arete*. It is important to note that the conversationalists expressly linked the ideas of excellence with professional judgement, which they felt was inhibited by an authoritarian approach to curriculum and time allocation. I argue that from the concept of *arete* there is a moral element to teaching, which I acknowledge here, but I also point forward to Chapters 7 and 8 where I discuss morality more fully. Because the conversations revealed tensions

between teachers and the state, I chose philosophers who also had something to say about this. I discuss different systems of education and different perspectives on these: Plato and state control, Locke and Rousseau who deny the state's right to control and Dewey for whom the emphasis is the centrality of individual experience. I conclude from the discussion in this chapter that the teachers' voices give both valuable insights into the concept of excellence and valid objections to the authoritarian approach of the state.

In this chapter I therefore examine both the idea of *arete*, meaning 'excellence', and the role of the state in education. I 'converse' with each philosopher in turn rather than examine the concepts from the different points of view. I do this partly to show the chronological development of the concepts themselves, but also to give a better representation of each philosopher as if in conversation. Evidence of the powerful influence of today's context in understanding quality is indicative of the importance of examining the development of these ideas in context. The word 'quality' in its present day meaning did not exist for these philosophers, but their intention of what is to count as high quality education or excellence is clear. Teaching is seen as a more complex concept than that of a public responsibility evaluated on learners' outcomes. Because a non-technical concept of quality cannot be precisely defined, there is room for interpretation, and it is in this area of interpretation that I locate professional judgement.

The teachers' notions of excellence arise out of their experience, but there are also allusions to fully developed philosophical ideas. I introduce the philosophers I have named above because they focused on issues in education that are important in the conversations. Although the selected philosophers take different stands on the role of the state and of the individual, they each espouse and give full respect to the concept of *arete*. I do not intend to give an in-depth review of any corpus of philosophical works. Rather, I have selected, as one would in a conversation, those aspects that are relevant to the argument proposed. Throughout this chapter there is comparison between a model of understanding excellence which implies morality, and a concept of quality which

consists in producing “well-honed parts for the machine of state” (Viv, in conversation, July 2007).

Excellence

My research question is: What is quality in education? It is clear that it is an essentially contested concept (Gallie, 1956), but this does not prevent discussion on what we mean by it. It is obvious, from the fact that the notion of quality in education is contested, that there has been much discussion on this concept and there will continue to be so. This is the proper work of philosophy. Concepts shift with the times, and I am mindful of the cultural context in which philosophers wrote about quality, as well as the differing perspectives of those who have interpreted their works. What has happened in the past and what will undoubtedly continue to happen is that some notice is taken of differing perspectives, but what will prevail is ‘what works’ for the political or social agenda as well as what is naturally subsumed into the language. I commented on this aspect in the section on metaphors in Chapter 4. It is one of the roles of philosophy to alert us to the partial arguments that are sometimes put forward with such persuasiveness, and to the gradual shifts in understanding that may erode our fundamental beliefs almost without our noticing them. I claim that both these issues apply to our general understanding of the concept of quality.

I need to say here that I use the word ‘quality’ interchangeably with ‘excellence’. It is not that I do not perceive differences between them, but I claim that in my particular study those aspects of quality that I am researching are the aspects of excellence which have been lost in the accepted terminology of quality language in use today. In the chapter on definitions I review the rise of technical language with its ‘specifications’ and ‘tolerances’ in order to meet repeatable results. It is named ‘quality control’ because it is a method controlling the quality of the product. When we use the word ‘quality’ in ordinary language it is an ellipsis for high quality, meaning something has been made well or done well. There is therefore an overlap of meaning in these instances. If we

intend poor quality, we say as much. When we speak of 'excellence' we are referring to something that is the best of its kind, in excess of the norm (or what is required), and not achieved by many: a superiority in quality. This is a logical, not an emotional response to the word 'excellence'. So when I interchange quality and excellence I am intending that part of the overlap with the ordinary everyday concept of quality that also means excellence, and not the overlap with pre-specified, standardised quality.

When I ask a teaching colleague what quality is, or what excellence is, I get pauses and hesitations, and then reflection before examples and stories are given rather than definitions. When I ask a business person the same question, I get this answer:

Tony, a business manager: It is one of three things: one is getting the customer what he wants; two is having a process that is repeatable and three, it is getting things done right the first time. Excellence is complete satisfaction on all sides that the job has been done as required.

The shift to the technical term has certain advantages, which I have discussed in Chapter 3, but has brought with it a diminution of the power of a generally accepted meaning of quality. It is an important part that is diminished. For without this general understanding that quality also entails excellence in some way, the technical meaning becomes partly devoid of its power. I argue that this technical meaning of quality excludes the moral commitment in *arete*. It has no need for it. If the technical meaning of quality is applied to matters of education and it does not take account of excellence then it undervalues those teachers who are fulfilling their excellence in helping young children to realize their own. In conversation, Viv revealed that she wanted to emphasise the manner in which a teacher's own striving for excellence is an important part of what makes teaching excellent.

Viv: I think very strongly that what is required of a teacher is that they have themselves a love of learning. I don't think it matters particularly what that love of learning expresses itself in but there has to be a sense of excitement about learning and of a continuing process of personal intellectual development...I do think it [excellence] has to do with the sort of things I've been talking about...

[For example] I watched a large number of students giving the literacy hour. Some did it very competently, exactly by the book, and others did exactly the same but because they had internalised what the formula was based on and what it was trying to do, they were bringing something from their own stock of understanding and knowledge which took the material (this passage being looked at for example) and took the children beyond that immediate bit of learning into something like a great interest or wanting to know more, (pause) an excitement. And you could see the children suddenly grasping the concepts or feeling their imagination kindled by the story or seeing they could go beyond in a mathematical pattern and so on. It is something to do with the person doing the teaching being *present* in the material.

Excellence is often a disturbing factor for those involved with quality control or quality assurance procedures, since it seems to be open to subjective (or value) interpretation, which it partly is. Excellence is also included in a checklist, for instance in assessing teaching quality during an inspection. These notions of excellence have their uses and are meaningful in context. I argue, however, that technical quality evaluations do not take account of 'the task of morality and the morality of the task' (Dewey, 1916). I further claim that inspections do not, and are not able, to evaluate those aspects of professional judgement that describe an individual's moral commitment to education, or the effect of the relationship between teacher and child. I shall argue in the theory chapters that it is this commitment, and relationships, that are fundamental to a concept of excellence in teaching and quality in education.

In search for answers to the question 'What is a quality education?', or 'What is excellence?' I have found more questions than answers, but the fundamental ideal of such concepts stem from a belief in the good of education. Whether education is seen as instrumental in producing courageous soldiers, honest citizens, future politicians, saints, noble savages, disciplined intellectuals, a talented elite, balanced individuals or useful employees, the ideas can be found in the great philosophies. Whatever an ideology or social practice puts forth as their definition of the purpose of education, these ideas can be traced through our heritage in the form of Socrates, Plato or Aristotle. I am not going to show these connections, but I am interested in looking at what this ideal meant in

context and what it means today. This quality that was, and is, considered so important and is still the subject of debate owes its heritage to the Greek concept of *arete*.

Arete

Nussbaum (1986) translates *arete* as excellence when she is writing about moral virtues and goodness. When writing about these she informs us that for her human excellence is taken from Aristotle's "excellences of character," as well as his "excellences of the intellect." It is also relevant to my argument that she emphasises that what is lost in translation, for instance with *eudaimonia*, is the active part, as in 'activities', rather than the passive state that is implied for instance, in the translation of happiness. Similarly, she argues that *arete* is about excellent living, not just about a state of excellence, whatever that might be. This is an important point when considering excellence for teachers. It is about how they 'live' their teaching and their teacher roles. I understand that *arete* applies to things too, such that an axe or a sword can be excellent in 'being' exactly what it is supposed to be. *Arete* is undeniably bound up with morality when understood as a human characteristic since it is about how we should live, how we should be doing exactly what we need to do in order to live the full life. I will argue in the theory chapters that excellence is underpinned by moral principles rising from this idea of *arete*: acting with moral integrity and being aware of unpredictable outcomes. It is this overarching explanation of excellence that is an integral part of an individual's understanding of morality. Individuals decide if they have been true to their ideals, not an external body. This resonates at every turn with the teachers' conversations.

In *Ancient Education and Today*, Castle (1961) gives an insight into what influence Plato had and how the basis of his educational ideals was virtue or excellence, these words being an incomplete translation of all that is implied in the word *arete*:

The Greeks were certainly the first educators of our western world. Homeric ideals form the basis of their culture and these ideals influenced much subsequent thought in education. Homer's heroes were endowed with "arete" a

word that defies easy translation. It is often translated by the English word 'virtue', but this is misleading because 'arete' can mean less than virtue as we understand it with its overtones of moral goodness, and also more, because it can mean excellence of many kinds not implied by the word. To the Greeks 'arete' was that peculiar excellence that makes a thing or a horse or a soldier, or a hero, the best, the most effective of their kind. (Castle, 1961, p 12.)

The word 'effective' is used here, in 1961, without all the connotations that have subsequently become part of the effectiveness thrust in educational policy. It did not then have the technical thrust that it has today. (Part of the rationale for using this commentary is that it offers the kind of perspective that is not affected by the technicist frame that Dunne (1993, p 25) discusses.) But it is the spirit of the concept of *arete*, rather than the definition of the word, that I am trying to tease out with my examination of 'quality'. The spirit of quality looks like a direct descendent of *arete*. It implies excellence. This excellence, which meant honour in battle for Homer, gradually became associated with more complex and higher order ideals.

When Hector gently turned aside the appeal of Andromache and his little son to face certain death, and when centuries later Socrates preferred hemlock to silence when truth must be spoken, each was obedient to his 'arete'. (Castle, 1961, p 13.)

Castle is speaking about the value placed on life, arguably the highest excellence that we understand. For example: Homer: "always to be the best, and to be distinguished above the rest." *Iliad* (Line 208, cited in Castle 1961, p 14.) The same tenor is understood in Sydney Carton's thoughts on the scaffold: "It is a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known." (Dickens, 1989, p 383.)

Both of these ideas of excellence, one voiced by Homer, the other by Dickens, speak of the belief that it harms one much more to do an injustice than to suffer one. Socrates expounds this very idea:

S: To do wrong is the greatest of evils.

Polus: Is that the greatest? Is it not greater to suffer wrong?

S: Most certainly not. (*Gorgias*, §469b)

A moral interpretation of virtue together with a belief in a life after death are just two of the many ideas that were incorporated into Christian theology. When Plato is proclaimed to be a Christian before Christ, this is another way of saying that these ideas were already part of the Western culture. Virtue and morality are now married in our language and thinking, and the concept of excellence in education likewise is understood as it was originally intended – as a virtue, a fulfilling of duty, of using all your talents for good, of using your abilities in the service of others as well as yourself. It is a moral concept, not just an educational one. Writing of the Athenians, Castle says,

...especially in Athens...one of the aims of education was to cultivate excellence in individuals. (p 43) (And later).... It was not the artist or the architect but the poet, the musician, the statesman, and the philosopher to whom they offered their highest allegiance, for these were the men who represented, and taught, what the true 'arete' was. (Castle, 1961, p 102.)

Education was certainly for forming and developing an individual in ancient times, and not for mass training for trade or profession. Plato and Aristotle thought technical instruction was useful, but not that it counted for education. This wholeness is expressed by the word '*paideia*' meaning one's whole culture. In the *Laws*, Plato explains '*paideia*' as

...the education in '*arete*' from youth onwards, which makes men passionately desire to become perfect citizens, knowing how to rule and how to be ruled on a basis of justice. (*Laws* 643e.)

The classical background

These great ideals founded by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, each in different ways, are the very same ideals that were "glorified by the Renaissance man, informed the Christian piety... and penetrated the English public schools, whose idea of 'arete' was to behave like a gentleman somewhat like an Homeric gentleman." (Castle, 1961, p105.) I

don't think for a moment that this ideal is appropriate for 21st century citizenship but the recognition of the origin of such an ideal brings grace and distinction to those who question its validity. Castle argues convincingly that this ideal of excellence is very much present in our history of education from ancient times to at least our recent past.

Plato's Athenian style could not have been more different from his conception of Spartan state education, which was framed in terms of preparation for war. Athenian education was in music and gymnastics. This education, which was admittedly only for the guardians, was for the best possible minds for the best possible outcome: a good and virtuous individual. Intellectual and moral discipline shared importance with physical development. Plato recognised and planned for an elite who would have the leisure and the wealth so as to immerse themselves fully in their education which continued until the age of fifty, when they would finally come to philosophy, only after years of discipline and experience. However Plato is arguing also that the state has the right to make decisions about education that override individuals' beliefs and in this he clearly differs from Socrates.

Both Plato's and Aristotle's arguments on education granted supremacy to political and institutional considerations over the essentially personal considerations championed by Socrates. The influence of Plato's and Aristotle's works on the subsequent history of Western Civilisation, and particularly Western learning, is incalculable. (Hogan, 1995, p 40.)

Classical excellence has had a lasting influence. None of us can claim to be devoid of the profound influence of centuries of philosophic thought on education. Where we take up the argument or the practice of teaching, or both, is a question of timing and luck, much in the same vein as we understand luck (the Greek *tuche*) in terms of when we were born and what influences were prevalent at that time, as Nussbaum argues convincingly. (Nussbaum, 1986.) The classical influence of Plato is clear in today's regulation of the curriculum by the state. The classical influence of Socrates' 'personal considerations' is clear in the teacher's conversations. The good fortune or misfortune

(the luck) of our own education places each of us in a context which influences us but which need not circumscribe our thinking.

The system we have in schools at present seems to the teachers to be training our children to pass exams. Students may well ask: Without final exams, what is the point? This is conditioning which neither Socrates nor Aristotle would advocate. I think Plato wanted to condition all in the early stages and only the most able (by his discrimination), would benefit from further education in terms of thinking for oneself. The state was the highest concern; the individual was to serve the state. Through education Plato would find his rulers, but education was not *primarily* for the job of finding them. It is clear that education aids each in achieving, but it is for each person to find his *arete* and live up to it at all costs. Whatever you do in life, the sense of achieving excellence is primarily because it is what each one should be doing. *Arete* demands from within that a person be the best possible. Again this ideal is clearly the basis of the stories of excellence that the teachers related.

These ideas about excellence remain part of the basis of our concept of quality and excellence in education. The stories within the conversations give evidence of this fundamental view that teachers using their professional judgement, being their best and doing their best, are responding to their moral integrity. *Arete* as a concept underpins our present day meanings of excellence and quality in a way that is not easy to describe but is recognisable in all the stories given as examples and all the stories of our heroes both ancient and modern. In the move towards a more technical meaning for quality these conceptual and linguistic foundations have been obscured, but the concept has retained these deeply rooted ideals of excellence. It is relevant to the argument of this thesis that this concept of *arete* was embedded in the stories of the Heroes. How else were such concepts taught? In the theory chapter it is the stories told by teachers that reveal the concept in a manner that is better than definition.

What has become known as a classical education is one that is based on the ideals held by the ancient Greeks and Romans. The ideals of the classical education varied from state to state and from time to time, but were basically the learning of ones' heritage in the arts, literature dance and music. This form of education was formalised and rigorous and not as reflective as perhaps Socrates would have envisaged, but certainly strictly laid down, as Plato would have expected. Education developed different ideas through the ages, and though a great deal has changed much of the seminal thought about conversation and reflection, the ideals of classical education have remained as part of the true Socratic tradition, making it part of our Western civilisation. The classical style of learning became formalised into different stages and is clearly articulated in the religious schools of the Middle Ages when classical education clearly followed set stages. Although there was separation into a first and then a second stage, within each stage attention was paid to the development of the student. Already we see a small shift in emphasis to the development of the individual, although the required curriculum keeps control.

The ideals of classical education were taken over by the Christian ethic (Hogan 1995) and through the ages the church became the repository of knowledge; for the most part the church offered the only way to obtain an education. The ideals of Socratic dialogue suffered from authoritarian interpretation and metaphysical beliefs that made education unavailable to all except the wealthy or the powerful. But throughout this long period of ecclesiastical power over education, which includes the philosophical writings of Saints Aquinas and Augustine, there is the idea of sovereignty, on which Hogan elaborates. Education is worthwhile for itself. It is more than instrumental, although it is that as well, and it has an important quality in its value for the enrichment of the individual.

...the practical ideal of education as an unfinished and unfinishing human seeking; a seeking which allows an essential measure of sovereignty to the teachers and learners who engage in it. (Hogan, 1995, p 53.)

The difficulties that my teacher colleagues and I related in the conversations in the previous chapter reveal the dilemma of reconciling state mandates that often conflict with professional judgement. This brings me to the discussion of philosophers with different views on the role of the state. What is noticeable is that despite differences in emphasis regarding this role, all the philosophers discussed in this chapter retain a commitment to *arete*, which differs in emphasis depending on judgements of value concerning the aims and purposes of education.

Wisdom

Plato's ideals were revolutionary but the role of wisdom was not original. The love of wisdom predates Socrates and the writings of Plato, in that we have heroes and examples of courage and wisdom in the folk history of every culture. Love of learning and honouring our heroes may be the earliest form of education we can imagine. Plato has taken Homeric virtue into his education philosophy and made it an ideal not just for itself but also for the making of a whole person. It is not surprising that we find this ideal in Christian theology nor that we can find it in Dickens' novels. It has become part of what we mean when we speak of what is good, noble, and excellent to this day.

Education has taken very many forms but there is always that discernible element that education is as much about love of wisdom as it is about knowledge. How far this part of the concept is hidden under layers of state requirements, religious interpretations or personal interpretation is impossible to tell, but with the exception of training (sometimes used synonymously with education) such as rehabilitation or boot camp, education is fundamentally 'a good thing,' and inculcates a love of learning. I believe that these ideas of excellence, of self-knowledge, of wisdom (meaning right judgement), of knowledge (meaning the acquisition of facts, skills and information) and of being the best you can be, are all expressed in the classical concept of *arete*. These ideas are

reflected in the teachers' understanding of what is excellent in education. These are the ideas that are not reflected in ideas of quality taken from the manufacturing world.

The idea that philosophy, the love of wisdom, is the core of education and is in itself an essential part of the concept of education was born of Socrates and given to us in Plato's and Aristotle's writings. Wisdom is not eclipsed, to use Hogan's (1995) word, though the Socratic Method may have been. Certainly the method has lost its openness in its use in teaching when it is more in line with Plato's idea of remembering what we once knew. Socrates did not make such claims (Hogan 1995). It is the Socratic discourse that is truly educational and truly philosophical because it not only admits of many different solutions or none at all, but also seeks for possible changes in thinking. However, recent work on *Philosophy for Children* (Pritchard, 2006) seeks to recapture something of the Socratic spirit of enquiry.

It is wisdom and not knowledge that Plato seeks through education. With knowledge we can know what it is right to do; only with wisdom will we choose to do so. Wisdom is demonstrated by living up to one's *arete* to being excellent. This difference also explains why training (having the know how) does not equal education (having wisdom). Both knowing that and knowing how are discussable as 'knowledge' but are not identical. The espousal of the concept *arete* is implicit and given full respect in all the philosophers that I study. Their desire for the individual to become excellent is vested in a moral order and never in a 'mercenary' (Hogan, 1995) one. These fundamental ideas of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle are the footings upon which concepts of education have been built over the centuries. They "form the foundations of Western education." (Russell, 1946.)

Plato wrote of the sophists' style of verbatim teaching in the 5th century BCE. Today the learning of vocabulary lists for the Science SATs as described by Sue (in her conversation with me in 2002) smack of the sophists' style of education. Teachers today

argue against this kind of learning, as they want children to understand the meaning and use of science word lists.

Sue M: ...where you can actually teach children, for example in science, you can actually get your children to get very good end of Key Stage 2 SATs results by teaching the vocabulary. We know already that our school could raise our SATs scores in science simply by, every time science is on the curriculum we give them word lists to learn and they bring back the following week and we test them on these words and get them to put the word into a sentence. It is purely vocabulary and memory. Now we don't do very well on science because we actually teach science. We teach them how to devise an experiment, teach them to make an hypothesis. We don't teach them that this is the only answer. We say we can find out more. So that's where the National Curriculum falls down.

The present emphasis on knowledge as facts is part of the same debate. A system, as the one in England, that measures outcomes could not have wisdom as its objective, although wisdom is, in my view, the proper end of education. Knowledge can be tested, or so it seems, but this presents another debate: is it knowledge or is it merely information? Plato clearly sees the distinction between knowledge and information, since knowledge was first and foremost self-knowledge and such knowledge informed moral judgement. He places the morality of the person as the foremost quality by which he can be judged. Knowledge and goodness are related for Plato in the way that wise judgement and goodness are related, not as information and goodness might or might not be related.

I want to look briefly at the implications here of the connection between knowledge, judgement and wisdom. For Plato it seems very straightforward. If you have knowledge you will be wise because only through being virtuous will you gain knowledge. This is a particular epistemology that he maintains by introducing the idea of perfect forms. Metaphorically by turning to the light we will perceive reality and not the shadows. Plato's approach to knowledge is through learning all the qualities necessary to become the best possible in mind and body. He accepts that not all will achieve this but those who pass all the 'tests' will continue learning, to become the most

able and finally the most wise. I believe that 'educated' means having knowledge but also the ability to put it to good (not evil) use and that means making sound judgements and possibly being wise. This is quite different from being knowledgeable, because that can be a state on its own with neutral ground.

As Wilfred Carr advises in *Being Critical* (1989), allowing the positivist view of knowledge to prevail and accepting that knowledge is purely instrumental is limiting the understanding of knowledge. He claims that once knowledge is applied to solving problems or giving advice, it becomes informed judgement. I would refer here to Ryle's 'knowing that' and 'knowing how'. Both require knowledge but in different ways. 'Knowing that' 11 year olds need to know x certainly does not give me the sort of knowledge for 'knowing how' to get them there. The practice of teaching depends on knowledgeable teachers, but also and more importantly, I claim, on the ability to teach. Knowing how to teach is not the same as knowing about teaching, nor does it consist in practical advice or information, which may or may not be what constitutes practical knowledge. I am not claiming that knowledge and judgement are the same. Knowledge informs judgement which can be good or bad, whereas knowledge cannot be false. The former is a value judgement, the latter a matter of known facts. It would be on the basis of judgement that one would be considered wise. The stories reveal teachers' wise decisions. But that is their value judgement. Another time or place or another teacher may consider them unwise. Education creates possibility, not infallibility. It is the possibility that through knowledge we get wisdom, but it is not an infallible route.

The judgement revealed in the stories in the conversations tells of decisions made on the basis of a desire to help, enlighten, and encourage a child or group of children in their learning. It was wise judgement, that in the teachers' opinions made for excellence. Did they make wise decisions? Did they make good decisions? Because of the unpredictability inherent in all teaching/learning occasions, the outcomes *could* have been different. This does not affect the excellence perceived by the teacher telling the story, nor the validity of their perceptions. (I point forward to the theory chapter in

which I argue that it is the teachers' input rather than pupil outcomes that supports ideas of excellence.) Sometimes, looking back, teachers decide they made good decisions which at the time they had thought were poor. There is nothing in teachers' judgements that is categorical, definite and closed (as distinct from definite but open); only possibilities. Acceptance of wisdom in an individual context is far removed from the wisdom that Plato expects. His truths are definitive, and philosopher kings could not make unwise decisions.

In ancient Greek philosophy, wisdom and goodness are related. There was an expected relationship between the questions of what is good and what is knowledge that is fundamental to Socratic thought. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates argues that living a good life is not related to power and wealth, despite both Gorgias' and Polus' objections. He argues there that no one could be happy unless they were also virtuous. As Russell (1946) maintains,

...the close connection between virtue and knowledge is characteristic of Socrates and Plato. No man sins wittingly. Only knowledge is needed to make all men perfectly virtuous....This connection established in Plato's epistemology lingers on in the co-joint ideals that we need to be educated to be any good, and we need to be educated to be good. (Russell, 1946, p 102.)

I note that Russell made these claims fifty years ago before the managerialist framework or the ethos of performativity became standard, and I wonder if they would be made in quite the same way today. I deliberately chose these comments as they are not outdated, and it is part of my concern that such comments revive this perspective. This connection, which Russell notes, is one that I would support, but it is not one that sits comfortably beside the 'knowledge is power' slogan that I found disquieting when I entered school life in Texas, USA.

In the school district where I worked, 'knowledge is power' was broadcast in schools, administration buildings and at most teachers' in-service days and courses. The

television public service announcements carried this message giving differing situations when 'knowing x meant that you got y' when y was accepted as something everybody wanted, e.g. a qualification, a good job, a promotion. The idea of education as a commodity discussed by Rozema (2001) is exemplified in this slogan. And it shows how far we have departed from the ideal of knowledge and virtue.

Despite the force of 'knowledge is power', a phrase implying that knowledge enables you to do or get what you want (which may not necessarily be to do, or to get anything good), it is questionable whether the slogan really means 'information is power'.

'Information' carries no morality in its pockets, whereas 'knowledge' is still carrying that undertone from its roots in ancient Greece. The connection between information and knowledge is analogous to facts and understanding, whereas knowledge and wisdom is analogous to understanding and application. By this analogy I mean that how we apply knowledge will determine the wisdom of the application. Whether this application is wise and that one not is a value judgement. Wisdom itself is not a value judgement but the attribution of wisdom is. The criminal who uses his knowledge and makes good judgements for his purposes (wise decisions for him) to carry out a successful robbery has subversive societal values based on the morality of personal gain rather than public good. So the use of the adjective 'wise' is suspect in this particular example. He made a self-serving and clever decision but can a thief, even a clever thief, be wise? I am sure there are many epistemological arguments that can prove me wrong and I may be taken to task for having too much ancient philosophy in my head. But it is an ideal that I will hold to and I believe teachers believe that too. We teach so that children will grow up wise and good, not stupid and evil.

Self-knowledge is not to be confused with personal information. Self-knowledge, 'to thine own self be true', forms the basis of one's morality. I refer to the stories which the teachers related in their conversations to support my contention that teachers hold with the connection between knowledge and virtue. It would be unthinkable that a teacher

deliberately set out to subvert children for antisocial purposes. Public/state schools are not intended to be places of indoctrination, though I am aware that this is a debatable stand to take. As part of the concept of *arete* a good teacher will teach to the best of their ability to enable pupils (or other teachers) to be the best they can be. In doing this, good teachers will empower others to believe in themselves no matter what level of ability they have.

John: The great thing is, as the Chinese proverb says, 'as the leader walks, the people will say, we did it ourselves.' That's the secret of leadership of complicated arrangements, giving them a power over their own lives stage by stage. People respect leadership, which leaves them to feel more able to do it themselves. *And really to know that.* (John's emphasis) But actually doing that when you are faced with teachers who are really a bit inadequate, stupid or lazy – it is very difficult. There is no doubt about that. But you have got to keep working with the material you've got. Think of it in terms of what is prudent, and even of redemption. If you give up on that idea you really shouldn't be in education.

John is supporting the idea that head teachers (and I would add all teachers) need to have a moral sense of purpose as well as good judgement, or prudence as John names it, whatever the level of ability of the individual teachers. As teachers we have to accord that sense of purpose and prudence to children too. Teachers and learners have to make decisions for themselves, and sometimes believe they have made decisions which owe more to others than might be acknowledged. There is a trust between teacher and learner that should not be violated and will not be if the teacher abides by the professional sense of moral responsibility.

We cannot imagine that an excellent teacher is not also one who has the knowledge to be excellent. Knowledge of child development is part of the knowledge base that teachers learn. Having knowledge of a specific subject is one thing, but having self-knowledge is quite another. The relationship between knowledge and virtue is part of the basis of professional judgement. Professional judgement in education is founded on all the learning (knowledge of children and of the subject and of education), all the experience (the teachers' own, their teaching experience and the child's) and self knowledge (how

do I understand this? how do I behave in this situation? what should I do?) that a teacher has accrued. So I perceive the same connection between knowledge and morality (virtue) that Socrates argued for. When I argue for professional judgement I am not arguing for subversive or anti-social dogma to be paraded as professional judgement.

Many of the teachers' conversations reveal a tension between the need to obey state requirements and an inner compulsion to behave according to their strongest beliefs. Emily, for instance, found it intolerable that she could not continue with music with her special needs students and eventually moved out of teaching. Jill decided to ignore certain requirements at the beginning of each year so that she could pace the 'settling in together' process as she saw the need. When examined closely, it was clear that these compromises were open to different interpretations and stemmed from the teachers' genuine attempts to understand the tensions of being responsible citizens, especially when they were working in a state school, and being true to their own ideals. Such actions and their rationales are examples of professional wisdom, and occasions for debate, such as Socratic discourse.

In *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003) the present UK government claims, and in its own terms proves, that effectiveness and excellence are describable, measurable and central to education. This is an attempt to align the concept of excellence to the government's own instrumental purposes and to empty the concept of much of its significance for education. It is successful in losing sight of *arete*. It is an attempt to reduce a value-laden judgement to an objective, quantitative statement. This is not simply a problem of what is and is not measurable. It is clear that the relationship between teacher and learner that teachers' stories illustrated has been sidelined. By undermining the teachers' value judgements, the subjective input, the qualitative judgements, the professional skill of teachers becomes redundant or displaced on the scale of importance. Professional skill is still required but it is to be used in being creative with the government's mandates rather than directly involved with making choices about what, when and how to teach children.

I now examine questions about aims, morality, and the role of the teacher and child. I do this mainly through the writings of Plato and Dewey but I include Locke and Rousseau, both highly influential in our evolving understanding of the centrality of the child and the role of the teacher. Plato represents where we have come from. His influence still permeates philosophical thinking in all areas of education. Dewey represents the modern philosopher who brings the idea of human experience to the fore. His work is profoundly important in focusing on the interaction between teacher and learner, which is the single underlying common factor in the teachers' stories about excellence. In order to understand quality and excellence, we told stories that were exemplars of professional judgement. Quality and excellence emerge as something additional to fulfilling all state mandated targets. Something vital is left out of the concept of quality when we define it in measurable terms alone. I claim it is the moral element, which is related to *arete*, and traceable again through all the philosophers. In today's business model this moral element is missing to some degree because there is so little freedom for teachers to engage in professional judgement. I discuss this aspect further in Chapters 7 and 8.

Socrates and Plato

For Socrates, at least as disclosed in the early Dialogues of Plato, the goal is to discover the nature of concepts such as justice as in *The Republic*. This is done by a questioning process, which is essentially open-ended since Socrates leads his students to eliminate what justice is not, without having a pre-determined idea of what it is. The so-called 'Socratic Method' advocated during my re-qualification training in the USA in 1992 is intended to lead children by questioning to *the* correct answer. This method is strongly supported by Rick Garlikov (1998). He gives a transcript of a lesson on binary numbers to show exactly how it works. This example is much more a Platonic interpretation of the method than Socratic. Socrates never made claims to the truth in the way that Plato did (Hogan, 1995). Socrates was interested in the practice of teaching, which he did

himself, rather than the curriculum. I do not mean that he had no concern for the content; he did. Moral education was central to this. Plato sees education as a means to realising his ideal state. The most able are to be equipped for their role as governors of the state. We see both the ideal of the best possible education (the notion of *arete*), but aimed at a particular political result. As I discuss other philosophers this dichotomy expresses itself in the relative importance placed on the interests of the state or the individual.

Plato's aim was to use education as the means of training the body and mind to the highest possible level. He clearly sees different abilities as requiring different kinds and levels of education, and does not discuss the possible problem of those that do not fit into his scheme of things. His aims are directed at an elite and in no way are they aims for the rest of the population. Within the context of his times he builds on and advances education in terms of requiring understanding and reflection, and a deep moral commitment to be the best that you can be. He prescribes a balance of disciplines that keeps both physical and mental abilities active and engaged, and he has absolute faith that his guardians, having had the best possible education, would become the philosopher kings whom he would trust to make all decisions including those on education. His aim then is to find the best and continue to educate them until they are truly philosophers. Having described fully what qualities they need and how to achieve them, he then proposes a period of some fifty years by which time these 'best' should be ready to rule the state.

Socrates: Grant, then, education and maturity to round them off, and aren't they the only people to whom you would entrust your state? (*The Republic*, § 487c).

Thus he advocates both the instrumental role of education (education is for enabling the best to become rulers) whilst giving due respect to the intrinsic aims of education (each must find his own true *arete*). The state is foremost; the individual serves the state. Plato accords the state absolute authority, but there is no mistaking the centrality of wisdom as the true end of education in his ideal state. He does not accept what passes for education in his time; it is shallow and does not require moral commitment. In the *Gorgias*

Socrates searches for knowledge and truth in order to gain wisdom, and discounts rhetoric and techniques as image making:

It [rhetoric] has no need to know the truth about things but merely to discover a technique of persuasion, so as to appear among the ignorant to have more knowledge than the expert. (*The Republic*, § 459c.)

And in *The Republic*:

The nature, which we assumed in the philosopher, if it receives the proper teaching, must, needs grow and attain to consummate excellence... (*The Republic*, § 492b.)

Socrates' stated purpose in life, as a teacher, is to bring people to greater wisdom by questioning them and revealing their ignorance. In improving people's wisdom, he makes them more virtuous. In receiving criticism he becomes a better man. Socrates in describing himself attests to his *arete* in the *Gorgias*:

What kind of man am I? One of those who would gladly be refuted if anything I say is not true, and would gladly refute another who says what is not true, but would be no less happy to be refuted myself than to refute, for I consider that a greater benefit, inasmuch as it is a greater boon to be delivered from the worst of evils oneself than to deliver another. (*Gorgias*, § 458a.)

In *The Republic*, Socrates' argument was pitted against the sophists, for whom education was a means of 'getting on in this world.' He was intent on revealing that the sophists were educating for a means to an end. They were clever and used high technical skill to achieve their ambitions. Teaching the use of rhetoric, although it carried different connotations from its use today, was a worthy and wholly acceptable endeavour. Oratory was an area where every educated man was expected to excel, but Socrates wanted the actual words to be discussed, not just the effectiveness of their correct employment. The *Gorgias* is devoted to showing that rhetoric is flattery, among other less reputable qualities; the pejorative tone was already obvious to Socrates.

Plato's is the first voice to be heard arguing for total state authority in matters of education. For him it is a logical extension of how he argues for an ideal state that the best will receive the highest education and become state rulers. He describes a precise and logical system and though there are discussions at almost every turn, arguments are consistently based on the premise that different abilities of all men and women require different levels of education. Yet his argument was against the prevailing system at the time. He wanted an education that was not mere repetition as the sophists taught, but understanding and reflection too. Plato was clearly elitist, and within his cultural context he was controversial too in that he advocated equality with women. The best education is reserved for the most able who will eventually be the rulers. (A similar fundamental approach is found in France today.) His ideas on what counted as 'a good education' are in many ways as relevant today as they were then. Socrates wanted all things to be discussed and all subjects to be critically examined, which is clearly not the case for Plato who enjoins censorship and a controlled curriculum.

But if Socrates were here, he would be cross-questioning all of us and finding that we have not progressed very far because our fundamental ideas about education are still open to interpretation. The debate between the state's and the teachers' roles is at the heart of the educational debate. It is because there are no exact answers that it goes on. This does not mean that we cannot make more informed and more enlightened decisions about education, but it does mean that no one can finish the conversation. No one can claim that this system or any system is *the* answer, although one can properly claim that one system may be better than another, and supply reasons based on distinct and defensible educational values.

What if Socrates were here today teaching? He had *real* problems with the authorities about interpretation of his intentions. So great was the misunderstanding that he was sentenced to death by the state. He may not receive the death sentence if he were alive today, but he would probably lose his job as a teacher in Texas, USA if he continued to speak out, which he would do. He had the audacity as well as the genius to ask leading

questions and in the *agora* (market place) too. He spoke out because he believed that criticism, doubt and reflective thinking are of the utmost importance in every part of our lives. Fortunately there have always been and still are those teachers who believe passionately in this ideal, and it is this common thread that I refer to in all the philosophers. Even if I do not agree with their theories, or find their proposed practices abhorrent, I am encouraged by the debate, the acceptance that education is a living thing that will change and grow. I am inspired by Hogan's contention that we might separate the truly educational from the theory and the authority of tradition and understand it. We might understand education,

...the actual conduct of teaching and learning... as a practice in its own right, i.e. as a practice entitled to certain rights which are inviolable, but also accountable.
(Hogan, 1995, p 11.)

The Socratic ideal prevails.

We are far removed from Socrates in time, technology and cultural practices but the same debate continues over what counts as education, what education is for and why it is so important. For Socrates, in the end it was the deepest moral conviction, the integrity of the man as a whole that made him prefer hemlock to compromise. We may not have to take hemlock today but among the teachers that I conversed with there are more who struggle with the compromise than those who agree with the state's authoritarian role.

In *The Republic*, Plato delineates exactly what is important in the curriculum and for which reasons. He insisted that the early years were the most important, where foundations are laid in terms of attitude to learning, to the joys of discovery and to the complete physical well being of each child. Schooling must be enjoyable and should allow plenty of time for games and physical activities. As teachers, (which includes parents and carers) of young children know from experience, both theoretical and practical learning goes on all the time regardless of enjoyment. But it is arguably the enjoyable times and the balanced schedules allowing for plenty of physical activity that

lead to happy, healthy children and teachers too. J.S Mill's parents would be accused of child abuse today, but that they produced a genius there is no doubt. Among the main points of disagreement we as teachers could find with Plato's early years' curriculum would be his intense censorship of the arts. In today's classrooms there is selection of what is considered appropriate in the form of stories and pictures, and the classical standard of heroic virtue might not be met by all of those choices. Plato would impose limitations which some of us might find difficult to live with. Plato's push for the basics and his insistence on plenty of physical activity fuel both sides of the argument about the 'frills' of PE and the need for better literacy and numeracy. For Plato, however, the basics are quite different from those of people who advocate test scores as a means of judging what kind of education has been given or received. His basics were gymnastics and art. Nor is Plato advocating a so-called progressive style of education where children are free to discover connections and have plenty of playtimes, because he firmly comes down on censorship and disciplined structure. And neither of the above statements is in opposition to the other and neither are they mutually exclusive.

Plato furnishes us with arguments that are still debated today: the place of art and music in the curriculum, the importance of physical education at all ages, equality of the sexes in terms of access to the curriculum. His writing is the forerunner of many such educational ideas. We are his inheritors. These ideas are embedded in our consciousness as the foundations of philosophy and education (Russell, 1961). To ignore the importance and indefinable boundary of a concept such as education is like saying that Plato and the ancient world never existed. The concept today is given a new and more specific boundary within which to work, viz. a pre-approved standard, and yet it also retains that broader value-laden idea of something good, worthwhile, above the rest, excellent of its kind. And this excellence echoes in the other philosophers that I include in this conversation.

Plato explicitly perceives no contradiction in advocating teaching as an individual moral commitment at the same time as allowing the all-pervading authority of the state. For

Plato these two are the same, in that you look first at what a good state might be like and thence you will find the good individual citizen. There is not a simple parallel between Plato's state authority and the authority the teachers today find threatening in their conversations. Plato would only have 'the best' to be the teachers of 'the best.' He outlines in the Republic how individuals would be educated, and only those showing the proper moral attitudes would progress to be the guardians of the state. These guardians would also have the responsibility of educating future guardians. There is no indication on a practical level how such a system could come about, but I interpret these as ideals to work towards rather than ideas of a practical nature. Hence although Plato advocates complete state control he means a very different 'state' from the present political system that mandates what and how teachers are to teach. What is supremely important in Plato's philosophy is the place of *areté* in personal development and consequently in the development of the state. Although the state comes first for Plato and the citizen second, it is a 'chicken and egg' argument since his ideal state is already composed of ideal citizens which require the ideal state in order to make progress.

Locke

Locke's epistemological view is entirely different from Plato's idealism. Locke is an empiricist and learns all things from observation. He was a physician and therefore for him a more scientific approach would be a natural consequence following from his training and expertise. It is clear that his view on education is that it should be open to opportunities to enable learners to observe and learn from experience. For Locke it is also important that the teacher is of the best calibre and of the best upbringing. He understands that learning from example, especially in moral qualities, is vital from the earliest years. He thus has some links with Socrates and Plato but there are some discontinuities such as the importance of the individual and the understanding of experience in a way that Dewey would later expand upon.

Locke instructs us to treat each child individually and consider the place in society that each one will hold. His aim for education is to make accommodation for the individual child but to make sure that child grows into a socially acceptable gentleman. His aims like Plato's are for an elite, but Locke's elite are privileged by prior class and wealth. He gives us a detailed account from infancy about upbringing and 'breeding' and makes it quite clear that he is concerned with boys, and only the sons of 'gentlemen'. The choice of tutor is very important, as he must understand the child and not force education on him. The tutor's ideas would reflect

A man of calm good sense, setting down the wisdom he had gleaned during his years as physician, tutor and a man of affairs. (Gay, 1964, p 7).

It was not until the 17th century, when in 1693 Locke wrote *Some Thoughts Concerning Human Understanding*, that the importance of individual experience in learning was given voice. 100 years later Rousseau, while writing *Émile* in 1762, developed his idea of the centrality of the child, which then became the foundation of Dewey's *School and Society* (1900/1956) and *Experience and Education* (1938/1963). Neither Rousseau nor Dewey would have agreed with Locke's proposal to tailor education according to one's social status, although this would accord in some measure with Plato's view. But Locke advocated reasoning with children and basing the curriculum on what was needed for the child's future role in life, certainly not the traditional and accepted curriculum, which would have been a classical education. We see differentiation for individuals becoming important here, and though we may not agree with the demarcations of status in society, Locke has pushed educational thinking away from 'one size fits all'. Teachers would identify with Locke's insistence of perceiving each child as an individual with individual needs. This is clearly at odds with the system of a national curriculum with allocated timetabling that teachers complained about in 2002 in their conversations. Locke could not perceive quality of education to be other than an individualised approach.

Locke is the first philosopher to take the educational debate into the child-centred arena. He is no progressive advocate; his view is firmly instrumental. He wrote in *Some*

Thoughts Concerning Education (1693) on the importance of reason and understanding finding little use for rote repetition. Learning should not be forced; in fact it cannot be forced and it should be firmly matched to one's position in society. Here I see the tension between his ideal of education and the necessary intervention of state or societal concerns. In his case in answer to the question, 'What is education for?' the answer is 'For the individual, but taking into account his status in society.'

On individuality Locke writes:

Each man's mind has some peculiarity, as well as his face, that distinguishes him from all others; and there are possibly scarce two children who can be conducted by exactly the same method. (Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* §216.)

And later on in the same section he exhorts teachers not to "rely upon old custom." Although his "*Thoughts*" are very precise and practical Locke leaves it open to the teacher (parent and/or tutor) to interpret his ideas, having given, to his mind, sufficient reasoning to act on. The appeal is to discipline young children and open their minds to wisdom. Education is the defining characteristic for Locke:

I think I may say that, of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education. 'Tis that which makes the great difference in mankind. (Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, §1).

For Locke the moral element is uppermost, as it was for Plato. Qualities of character are more important than breadth of knowledge. Each child is given full acknowledgement of his individuality and receives encouragement and support in order to be the best he possibly can be as a well-educated and properly behaved gentleman.

Learning must be had, but in the second place, as subservient only to greater qualities. Seek out somebody that may know how discreetly to frame his manners... (Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, §147.)

Like all the philosophers I have selected, Locke treats education as a deeply moral undertaking.

As the strength of the body lies chiefly in being able to endure hardships, so also does that of the mind. And the great principle and foundation of all virtue and worth is placed in this, that a man is able to deny himself his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best, though the appetite lean the other way. (Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, §33.)

Locke perceives the centrality of teachers' moral commitment, but in a framework of reasoned discipline. The concept of *arete* is not mentioned but is implicit in his ideal of each man doing what he *should* do where that is an ethical 'should' in a personal ethics. The authority of the state is not respected as a moral arbiter; thus he shows there is need for caution in too willing acceptance of state ideas on education. Thus Locke speaks to teachers today whose stories reveal commitment to individual development and irritation with state impositions.

Rousseau

Rousseau's book *Émile* is the most significant book in the history of educational ideas after Plato's *Republic* (Doyle and Smith, 1997); it is certainly different and enlightening, taking an entirely novel view of children and of education. His view on the role of the state and individual is loud and clear. Rousseau would tell us it is our moral duty to free ourselves from the authority of the state and put the freedom of the child in the place of authority. He, like Locke, gives a very detailed account right from the earliest years of what to do and how to do it to ensure that you do not harm the child or interfere with his natural tendencies. His epistemology is of natural goodness. Man is "naturally good" until he is corrupted by society. Once born into society he needs to be properly educated so that he will engage with society and fellow citizens in a natural way. At birth the child is in a state of innocence, not of moral goodness. The child becomes morally upright by having proper guidance and example. But the important difference is that

each child has the potential of retaining that natural goodness provided his education is sensitive to his needs. Rousseau's aim is to make sure each child fulfils his highest possible potential by being unfettered by unnecessary restrictions. At the same time the disciplines of education will be introduced by sensitive and thoughtful teachers.

Here we have ideas on education that have been completely overturned in our present time. Teachers' conversations referred often to the 'interference' of the state and many of them would accept Rousseau's main contention that discipline and freedom are both needed in order to educate the child. The underlying requirement for Rousseau is of morally upright teachers who teach by example and closely follow the child's development. Both Locke and Rousseau are represented in the conversations, therefore, and serve to open up the debate about state authority. If there is too much interference then the best education cannot be pursued.

What was started by Locke in terms of acknowledgement that children are very different from adults and are entitled to be so was continued in a much more passionate vein by Rousseau. The foundation of knowledge and understanding is in the nature of things in themselves: in physical growth, in the environment and lastly in the experiences.

God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil.... (p 5)
...What is this goal? As we have just shown, it is the goal of nature. Since all three modes of education must work together, the two that we can control must follow the lead of that which is beyond our control. (*Émile*, 1974, p 6.)

Rousseau did not think education should be matched to one's status in society. It should be a very individual consideration, and he declared against the education of his time in common with all the philosophers I consider. He saw the need for different stages according to individual growth and understanding; he encouraged thinking for yourself and experiencing consequences in order to understand. (The example of the broken window where Émile learns that he gets cold could well be construed as discovery learning.)

Hogan claims that for Rousseau

....civilised society had made education a matter of slavish obedience to an Institutional authority, which was arrogantly insistent on conformity to its own precepts and also unconscious of its own intransigent prejudices. (Hogan, 1995, p 87).

This might be said by teachers today with regard to the intervention of the state both in the regulation of the classroom and in the relationship between teacher and pupil.

Rousseau was the most romantic of all the philosophers with regard to children, and not only does he not want state interference –he does not want parents' or teachers' interferences either. Their role is to follow the unfettered curiosity of the child. The uniqueness of each individual is recognised:

Each progresses more or less according to his genius, his taste, his needs, his talents, his zeal, and his opportunities for using them. (*Émile*, 1974, p 16.)

"Man is born free but everywhere is in chains," he wrote in his *Social Contract* but he very much expected members of a properly formed society to abide by all the rules imposed. It was only when the agreed terms were not followed that citizens had the right to dissent. Powerful governments had led to the reduction of individual liberty and Rousseau proclaimed against this infringement. This argument is mirrored in his educational thought. Thus in *Émile* he wanted individuals to become the best possible and not be restricted by inappropriate ideas and customs, but did expect responsible attitudes to develop and a sense of personal morality. Teachers should be the role models:

Teachers, have done with these shams; be good and kind; let your example sink into your scholars' memories till they are old enough to take it to heart. (*Émile*, 1974, p 29.)

In a controversial passage concerning the results of the usual teaching of morals, Rousseau explains how a child will learn morality from his own actions, or the 'proper' reactions by adults:

Thus you will not exclaim against their falsehood, you will not exactly punish them for lying, but you will arrange that all the ill effects of lying, such as not being believed when we speak the truth, or being accused of what we have not done in spite of our protests, shall fall on their heads when they have told a lie. For the sake of a show of preaching virtue you make them love every vice; you instil these vices by forbidding them. Would you have them pious, you take them to church till they are sick of it; you teach them to gabble prayers until they long for the happy time when they will not have to pray to God. (*Émile*, 1974, p 129.)

It is not surprising that this book was banned and burned at the time of writing, but contemporary psychologists might well agree that Rousseau had a good understanding of today's youth.

Referring to the legacy of Rousseau's *Émile* Hogan writes:

Its insights into childhood experience, its declaration on the innate goodness of human nature in childhood, its recasting of the teacher's work in a more sophisticated and subtle role, and its many pedagogical innovations arising from ideas such as these, provided many inspirations for the efforts of nineteenth century educational thinkers... From these efforts emerged at last a tradition which placed the quality of the pupil's emergent educational experience at the heart of the teacher's purposeful planning and enactments. (Hogan, 1995, p 89).

There is a model of excellence which emerges from these three philosophers that is worthy of consideration because many of the teachers concerns about state mandates are answered in logical arguments that give differing starting points and end points.. The role of the state is clear for Rousseau; there is no direct role. The individual needs to have support to develop freely and without authority of the state. The authority resided in the parent or tutor, provided they heeded Rousseau's advice. But it was an authority that was morally bound to put the child first. They were to guide the child by example and through understanding the child's needs. Plato argued that teachers were important (they had to come from the best guardians); their authority would be absolute because

they were the representatives of the state. The state came first; the individual was a product of the state. Rousseau has distanced himself from this kind of authority and argues for a childhood, which is quite different from preparation for adulthood along prescribed lines. In this relegation of the role of the state, however, Rousseau has upheld the morality of the enterprise. It is in understanding the responsibility of parents and tutors that morality remains central. The child is not to grow up undisciplined and left to his own devices; he is to be encouraged to be the best he possibly can be through careful guidance which is ever alert to his progress and interests.

Whereas Rousseau wrote passionately in personal appeals, Dewey referred to scientific reasoning. Rousseau foreshadowed Dewey in his claims for the centrality of experience and for the particular understanding apropos young children. Childhood was to be enjoyed and savoured and not to be seen as a necessarily difficult period of training of an incomplete adult. Not accepting an authoritarian model, Dewey saw the role of questioning as important to teaching and learning alike. Here we begin to understand more about the professional judgement that John suggests in his conversation. We have moved from the ideal education in the hands of the state into a different arena of public education where the very interaction between two human beings is considered to be the most important place. What matters is no longer a question of an individual or the state; it is the quality of the experience that the learner derives and the responsibility of the teacher's role in the experience. This idea is voiced by the teachers as a rationale for their stories of excellence.

Rousseau is the strongest opponent of the state's authority and is perhaps the most passionate about the freedom that children need in order to develop their best potential both as moral and as educated beings. *Arete* is not mentioned, but again implied beyond doubt. Rousseau heralds a different understanding of education in terms of the learner as well as the teacher. Some importance is given to the individual in Rousseau's philosophy (both as teacher and learner) but Dewey's push for the learning experience to

be the foundation of excellence marks the beginning of the kind of understanding that the teachers spoke of in their stories.

Dewey

The true end of education is what is best for all humanity and what is best in the long term." Dewey (1916, p 97.)

Dewey identifies what education means for him. He explains its purpose and how we can go about organising schools so that we encourage education for everyone. I identify very largely with what he claims education is about and how we could best go about ensuring education is productive rather than inhibitive. For Dewey, excellence lies in the 'here and now' quality of the experience itself. Dewey is associated with the progressive movement because the progressive versus traditional debate centres on the progressives seeking to discover and meet the needs of the taught. Traditionalists advocate curricula derived from the perceived needs of the state. The business model can perhaps be seen as the triumph of the latter approach, since within it, both content and methods of education are determined by the perceived needs of the society which funds the enterprise. But Dewey's philosophy is much more than progressivism. His philosophy is the embodiment of *arete* in both teacher and learner in that he proposes a moral theory of education espousing commitment at whatever level of ability.

Dewey asks us to consider the quality of the experiences of education above all else. In describing a new approach he writes:

To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity; to learning from texts and teachers, learning through experience... (Dewey, 1966, p 19.)

In *Experience and Education* (1963) Dewey writes directly on quality of education with an emphasis on the child's experience. The notion of quality and particularly excellence is present in all the philosophers I have studied. Dewey saw the necessity of making educational experiences enjoyable because of the continuing effect this has on all ensuing education. He claimed, as did Plato, Locke and Rousseau, that the early years, the beginnings of formal education, are the most critical as they are the foundation. Dewey emphasised:

...the importance for teachers to devise learning experiences in an imaginative way, so that these might live on creatively in the further experiences of learners; so that they might cultivate in the learner the desire to go on learning. (Dewey, 1938/1966, pp. 27-28.)

For both Rousseau and Dewey all children were to be encouraged to be their best in every way. Dewey certainly had many ideas about what was relevant to the lives of the children but his were not socially prescriptive views as were Locke's, and not as openly child-centred as Rousseau's. Dewey develops his theory from both the aspect of child development and from the importance of experience. These philosophers form a line of development in educational thinking that has influenced present day educational ideals.

Dewey represents the modern thinker who, like Locke and Rousseau, argued strongly against the status quo and in so doing was critical of the role of the state. He wrote about the individual as well as society in terms that are still relevant to us today. In *Experience and Education* (1966) Dewey writes about the natural control that living in society creates. It resembles something of Rousseau's natural tendencies, but Dewey goes on to elaborate (pp 53-55) that the natural state of shared living that creates this acceptable authority is different in the schools of his time. It is because schooling is not perceived as a shared activity in learning to live, that it is not enjoyed and not successful. Once it becomes a shared activity there will not only be a willingness to accept the authority of the school and the teachers, but such understanding will be born out of the "naturally sociable" (p56) nature of children.

Dewey's concern is in understanding how experience is truly educational rather than being in straightforward opposition to the state's role in prescribing the curriculum. In contrasting the importance of subject knowledge with knowledge of the child and the child's experience he wrote:

To oppose one to the other is to oppose the infancy and maturity of the same growing life; it is to set the moving tendency and the final result of the same process over against each other; it is to hold that the nature and the destiny of the child war with each other." (Dewey, cited in Dworkin, 1959, p 97).

Certainly Dewey's philosophy was grounded in the practice of teaching and learning. His concern is with what exactly happens in the classroom, what exactly each child is doing or expected to do. For him, the concept of quality remained clearly centred on individual excellence. He did not want to be understood in terms of any 'ism' neither progressive nor traditional. He was not interested in the debate on words and what they might or might not mean.

Dewey was writing at a time when the romantic view of children and their education culminated in to what is now called progressivism:

In education, progressivism brought together several familiar tendencies – but with contemporary modifications. One tendency was the romantic emphasis upon the needs and interests of the child, in the tradition of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel – but now coloured and given scientific authority by the new psychology of learning and behaviour. (Dworkin, 1959, p 9.)

In becoming more scientific in the approach to learning, the government's attention to education has concentrated on those aspects that are easily quantifiable. The result of presenting theoretical considerations based on measurements leads to practical difficulties. For example, when Dewey was looking for non traditional desks that he wanted for his classroom, he went to school suppliers and found he was in the wrong place. School desks were sloped and small and fitted a child, *just*. He wanted a flat surface for working on, for using tools, for painting and sharing. He was told, "These

desks are for schools sir, they are designed for listening.” How could he expect to find worktables when the prevailing ideology about schools (and education) was that teachers teach and pupils learn in a very orderly manner? As a pupil your job was to sit still, listen and learn. The desks were fine for that. They were necessary for a philosophy of education that put children in a submissive and passive role. Dewey realised the importance of children working for themselves as well as working things out for themselves.

It is pertinent to note here that in 2002 classroom accommodation has reverted from this Deweyan workspace ideal to closed classrooms where the teacher stands at the front with the children at desks in rows. Stuart’s school in Oxfordshire was required to change its workspaces into formal classrooms after their Ofsted inspections in 1990s. His conversation tells of the difficult time for the school when the entire building was reshaped after instructions following his latest Ofsted inspection. Dewey recognised that in order to change teaching style there needed to be a change in the environment too. In Stuart’s school it was necessary to restructure the physical environment in order to accommodate a different style of teaching. The lecture style is today advocated as more effective. It is undoubtedly more effective for a certain style of teaching and learning. It is a style that presupposes that the teacher teaches by telling rather than by working in groups and sharing ideas. The experience of learning by shaping the environment is evidence of an underlying philosophy of education.

What we want and need is education pure and simple, and we shall make surer and faster progress when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education may be a reality and not a name or a slogan. It is for this reason that I have emphasized the need for a sound philosophy of experience. (Dewey, 1966, p 91.)

The quality of the experience that Dewey emphasised has further refinement and direction in the writings of Hogan. In a paper delivered in Nottingham (2003) Hogan explains what he calls ‘epiphanies of learning’ as pivotal in the experience of teaching and learning with both good and bad outcomes. He makes a plea for teachers to be

aware of the everyday, the almost forgettable times, because we never know which teaching/learning experience, which interchange or lack of one between teacher and pupil, or which remark made by a teacher may be an important moment for a learner or a teacher.

Dewey concentrated in a new and sustained way on what constitutes quality in educational experience ... In this connection, it is necessary to emphasise, against the claims of Dewey's critics, that his writings offer no warrant for relegating either the importance or the authority of the teacher. (Hogan, 2003, p 3.)

I return to these ideas in the theory chapter in discussing the unpredictability of outcomes.

Dewey's problem of reconciling individual potential and growth with national requirements is something that is reflected in the teachers' conversations. The language and the style inform me that he was writing 100 years ago, but the ideas, the concerns and the difficulties are contemporary. He writes of the problem of education in American public schools and the dichotomy of two different approaches, the traditional versus the so-called progressive. His observations could be made in schools as recently as ten years ago in the UK and still today in the USA. In the Texas district where I worked until 1998, the words and phrases associated with traditional and progressive styles that Dewey despised were still the subject of debate. Ideas espoused by him were still considered progressive and controversial. The 'isms' that Dewey dismisses were better known than the theory or philosophy from which many of them sprang. Whereas in the 1990s in Texas, teachers were striving at last to be free from the traditional constraints in the Deweyan sense, the UK was retreating from a progressive period by putting together a traditional curriculum firmly based on the concept that the handing on of a body of established knowledge is the central concern of education in our state schools. This swing from one emphasis to another reflects some of the confusion of the last fifteen years in the UK. It is the swing that concerns me, because the power resides in the state as an authority, not just on public education which it is properly concerned with, but also on matters in the classroom where state mandates have replaced the

teachers' professional judgement. If this were seen as a return to Platonic ideals of absolute authority for the state it would be mistaken, for we have no evidence that those making the decisions are the best educated, the best and most just of all citizens, who will act with due responsibility and moral integrity.

The seriousness of Dewey's work seems to have been by-passed in both the American progressive model as I experienced it and the new traditionalist UK model (that is in England and Wales) as I am observing it. The forcefulness of Dewey's arguments for a theory grounded in 'where the child is at' and 'what is relevant to the child's world now and in the future' receives lip service in the jargon but is clearly less important than achieving a pre-determined level of achievement at each age and stage of school life. Results, the tests, the inspections, the following of the strategies laid down by the state, the raising of money for the raising of standards and the satisfaction of the customer all come way up on the scale of priorities both sides of the Atlantic. What this means is that the government in the UK took steps to change what they perceived as a failing system and instituted a rigorous style of authoritarian rule in order to redress the balance. The sovereignty of education that Hogan writes of was taken back from the teachers and handed over to the state. With such an imbalance of power real educational issues become sidelined. Rousseau and Dewey placed the child and the educational experience in the centre. When experience is not central then the educationally intrinsic aims are displaced too.

Education is for individuals and communities, I argue. Children need to learn how to live to their own highest potential and how to contribute to society. It can never be one *or* the other. The individual and society are mutually dependent not mutually exclusive. An individual's interest may take priority at times; at times it will be society's claim that is foremost. It is like rowing a boat. Pull equally on both sides and the boat can proceed forward on its journey. Too much on one side or the other and the boat goes round and round on circles. We do not at present have the right 'pull' that would create balance between the individual and society. The balance is not between educating *for* the state or

for the individual; it is a balance between the discipline of interests of one's own and the interests of others. For Dewey the society and the individual should not be at odds; they need to work together so that future citizens are valuable and moral members of the state. Schooling is the way to create a democratic life both in the school and in the larger community. Dewey's aims for education are for the advancement of individuals taking their place in a democratic society and therefore he advocates providing opportunities for democratic participation for teachers and children. (Apple and Teitelbaum, 2001.)

What is clear from the philosophers and from my friends in conversation is that excellence lies somewhere in the balance between the needs of individuals and societies combined with a balance between the open-ended and the pre-determined aspects of state education. Take John's story as an example. Any curriculum might require its learners to come to a recognition of the fact of death and acquire a capacity to come to terms with it. Who could have pre-specified the inspiration of the teacher dealing with the incident of the frog (Appendix A) and the need it would subsequently meet? I take up this argument further in Chapters 7 and 8.

In this chapter I have discussed some of the writings of Plato, Locke, Rousseau, and Dewey. I discuss in Chapters 7 and 8, Dewey's *Moral Principles in Education* (1917) in relation to forming a theory based on moral principles. These texts were chosen because they give a valuable range of educational perspectives on exactly the concerns raised by the teachers. From these texts I give differing views on the role of the state and the importance of the individual learner and teacher and discuss how these views relate to the teachers' concerns. I present evidence from these texts for the concept of excellence deriving from the Greek *arete* and show that just as the teachers place this concept at the heart of education so too do these philosophers.

The selected philosophers have revealed both sides of the tension between the ideal education and the interventions by the state. There are many common threads in each

philosophy, including the centrality of moral responsibility, the importance of the early years, the intense practical stages enumerated and discussed, and a great desire to get at the meaning of concepts and not the definitions or words in use at the time. All of these ideas are relevant to my research, none more so than the utmost importance accorded to the 'good' that education is, the value that each philosopher places on education as something worthwhile in itself, to be prized, something excellent. The personal commitment to a moral enterprise is expected of teachers, whether the state is the centre of authority or the individual. The desire for the very best to be achieved by all teachers and learners is paramount. Excellence is not a concept defined by achievement of pre-specified academic goals. Such achievement is expected not as *the* goal or the end, but as one of many obvious outcomes when *arete* has its right and proper place.

I turn now to the dialogues, which are in effect a conversation with myself. I composed these as a means of marshalling my thoughts on the many different educational issues that arose from the teacher's conversations and the philosophical discussion in this chapter. This analysis through dramatic, fictionalised conversation becomes a self-study. It marks the change from studying other teachers and texts to examining my thoughts on difficult issues in education. It continues the conversation but this time with myself.

CHAPTER 6

DIALOGUES

I explain in the Introduction that the analysis of the conversations, the philosophy review and the dialogues chapters did not occur in that order nor independently of each other. I refer back, but also point forward in these three chapters since they are related *as* they progress rather than in chronological sequence. The conversations were analysed during the process of writing the dialogues, in a different way from that in Chapter 4. Thus the dialogues are a result of the interaction of the conversations and the philosophers I studied, but all three chapters are inter-related rather than linear. These dialogues form part of a self-study too as I review my thesis all the time questioning the understanding gained in the philosophical review. This chapter describes first why I wrote the eight dialogues and what they are about. I explain how they furthered my understanding of education and by so doing how I gained a better understanding of the concept of quality and excellence in education. They are each an important part of the understanding of quality which I discuss before I examine three of the dialogues in detail: on aims, on time and on care, since these three give rise to consideration of the moral principles proposed in Chapter 7. The last part of the chapter gives a brief outline of the methodology of self-study which advocates reflection and critical thinking for the purpose of understanding/improving/changing educational practices in teaching and teacher education. I presented a paper on self-study at the *Self-Study of Teacher Practices* conference at Herstmonceux Castle (Stagg-Jones, 2004), using the dialogues from this thesis as an example of one way to engage in reflection and critical thought.

Why dialogues?

The conversations needed to be analysed and I started to categorise themes and responses in a variety of ways. All of the work I did seemed to lead me to further questions and the need to go back and talk some more or correspond some more. I did not at this time have a definite plan for the analysis of these conversations, other than to enlarge and educate my understanding of the concepts involved. I have previously argued that this methodology is appropriate for the conduct of the conversations since to do otherwise would have changed the dynamics of the interaction. I needed to be focused on my questions and in my search for clarifications but it required an openness and flexibility in accepting how the conversation progressed and how the concepts examined were discussed. Similarly, I approached the task of analysis with a strong focus on how the conversations furthered my quest in understanding the concept of quality in education. Since this is philosophy it is unsurprising that I begin to analyse by questioning and doubting and in doing so become more involved in probing further. I am philosophising about my own views aided by the promptings of the engaging conversations I enjoyed with teacher colleagues. It became clear that the foundation for the concept of quality is in understanding of the aims of education, and it is also clear from all the conversations that the teachers' aim and the government's aims are not in balance. The frustration I experienced in trying to find a way forward was centred around two points: how was I going to use the conversations to support and further my investigation, and how would I write about this endeavour?

When I had written my very first philosophical essay as a first year undergraduate at university I had critiqued Plato's argument 'that justice serves the interests of the stronger' by writing a dialogue based on his own. I had used Plato's format and many of his turns of phrase but to a different effect and a different result. I believed that this was a viable way to examine Plato's argument and add in my own thinking. When I began

to analyse the conversations in this research, I found myself writing a journal entry in the form of a dialogue with myself. This enabled me to examine what was said, which questions were raised and how I responded. There were so many more questions than answers and I could not find where my argument was proceeding. I had begun this research stoutly believing that there was no place for business talk in education and that such language was disfiguring the intrinsic aims that I passionately believe in. I was also expecting to find that smaller schools were more likely to achieve what I conceived of as a quality education. But colleagues who had used some of the business language and colleagues who had found the highest quality in large institutions challenged me. I had to begin working out for myself, reflecting, and arguing where the conversations and interactions had led me. In writing the journal I heard the voices of these teachers as well as my own, and the voices of the texts I had studied in philosophy. I wrote the first dialogue and I realised that in this way I could examine both my thoughts and those of the teachers in a more personal and dramatic way and one that I later came to believe was fitting for a philosophical thesis. The excitement at writing in this manner was liberating. I found differing voices from the conversations and I argued with them all. I found my voice in writing out my confusions.

I wrote on eight themes that are framed as questions, which occurred in the conversations and which I wanted to argue further at every turn. Each of the eight questions bears centrally on the issue of quality and shows that this is a complex concept requiring reflection on many philosophical and practical issues.

These were:

1. Is education for the state or the individual?
2. Is the business model useful?
3. Is childhood different from preparation for adulthood?
4. How do we balance long and short term goals?
5. What does quality in education mean?

6. How does time affect the intrinsic aims of education?
7. What role does the concept of care play?
8. Does the size of school matter?

The order of the dialogues was dictated by the sequence of the issues as they arose in the conversations and as such offer no priority of importance. In writing them I did not quote sources, nor did I acknowledge individual voices. I wrote always in two voices, though the voices represent many. Sometimes I am the questioner, sometimes the doubter. It is immaterial. The dialogues are intended to show the range of fundamental issues that contribute to the question of quality in education. At the beginning I was not sure how many dialogues I would write nor was it clear how each dialogue would proceed. Unlike the finished dialogues that are edited and re-scripted as necessary, I wrote in response to what seemed to be the most pressing concerns in the conversations *as* I was working out a method of analysing them. These dialogues sometimes clarified for me the foundations of my concept of education, from which I proceeded to have a better understanding of the difficulties involved in forming a concept of quality or excellence in education.

In this section I quote from parts of the conversations that were the springboard into three of the dialogues. I then give a short section from each of these three followed by how they have changed my thinking. I include in full, dialogue 1 on aims, 6 on time, and part of dialogue 7 on care. I chose these because they helped determine the principles which I discuss in the following chapters. The five dialogues not used in this chapter are complete in Appendix B.

The first dialogue is on the aims of education, and is perhaps the most important in rationalising the many strands of the conversations. There was much reference to the 'interference' of the government and as much to the priority of the individual. In the conversations I never asked questions about the aims of education. It is in the responses to my question about the teachers' current concerns that I gathered the depth of

convictions about the purpose of teachers' work. The roles of state authority and of individual professional judgement are necessarily interconnected, and examining the responses caused me to re-examine my own defence. Here I give parts of the conversations.

Alison, a deputy head in Oxfordshire, wants her children to be sociable and have an interest in learning. She sees too much interference by the state in the National Curriculum and the monitoring system. This does not mean that she feels there should be no regulation by the state.

My concerns are really that children come to school and that they do their best and that they are not allowed to drift. They must learn something but they should not be switched off by it. And I think that is a danger. Like the pressurised timetable it is very hard for some children. Yet in the early 70's maybe we let them drift too much and not enough structure.

Here is where Alison is questioning the amount of professional judgement that teachers should be allowed. Those of us who have experienced both styles of teaching (the 1970s and 80s where the teacher decided on teaching content and style and the 1990s where the state dictated on these issues) question the value of state authority that thwarts really good teachers. In the pre 1990s when the head and the teachers had power over the evaluation of both pupils' and teachers' progress, there was not enough done by some schools and teachers. But when schools were good, they were very good. At the present time where the head and the teachers have little input in the evaluation (by 2007 some teacher input is accepted), including the interpretation, of results and the progress of teachers, there are excellent schools, but are the ideas of excellence related to different criteria? Alison thought they were and may be not as sound as earlier ideas of excellence.

For Bonny, a superintendent of a Texas district, the question of accountability was uppermost in her concerns.

We should be accountable, but it's become the tail wagging the dog... What I meant was that the tail is the test results and the dog is good education.... Educators should be deciding what is good education and a certain amount of testing should serve to support that decision. I think the accountability system has made children into 'products' with benchmark tests to show how we are turning out our 'products.' Everything depends on the TAAS [Texas Assessment of Academic Skills] tests. There are a lot of the creative and fun things that have now gone by the wayside. There was a time, and this is why we have the accountability system now, that we did too many creative things. We do need to balance things.

Denise, a principal in Texas, states,

In our nation the initiative by President Bush to implement high stakes testing in every state of the Union and to tie passing or failing to achievement on these tests is a great infringement on education. I think it pushes kids through the system in a factory model....Real education is about tapping into what kids know and expanding on that and making them life-long learners. That varies from child to child. A teacher does not have that kind of freedom any more in the state of Texas as this takes hold across the nation, which it already has.

Just from these three selected comments I began to see that rather than a straightforward dichotomy between the state and the individual there was a greater respect for state interference, than I had felt myself. I was prepared for the state to provide the building and pay the teachers and provide the resources necessary, but I did not want to be told what I believed education was for, or how to go about doing the job of teaching young children. My confidence in relying on my own professional judgement began to look like arrogance. As Roy Corden, one of my supervisors who was also my critical friend, commented in discussion,

Is individual fulfilment an uncontested concept? In order to find fulfilment some people may commit acts of atrocity or infringe on other people's freedom or rights as individuals, e.g. Hitler? Saddam Hussein? The professional thief? The vandal who destroys a bus shelter? Also, isn't this a cultural concept - some societies may see individual fulfilment as being tied inextricably to the welfare of the state (collective individualism), if that is not a contradiction. So, a major difference that R. Alexander found in his international comparative study of discourse in the UK, USA, India, France and Russia was that in France and more so in Russia a corporate learning environment was common, whereas in the UK

and USA learning was seen much more as an individual 'privatised' concept.

My response was that I did not think 'individual fulfilment' was uncontested. It is what we are debating and what the debate has been about ever since education, and particularly public or state provided education, became a recognised concept. Do we believe that the state has the right to dictate not only what is to be taught but also how it will be taught and then devise its own means of evaluating the worth of the teaching? If I write that sentence in current jargon it would read differently but mean the same: Do we believe that the government of this country has the right to expect educators not only to teach the content of the agreed curriculum but also the manner of its delivery? And subsequently to monitor the efficacy and efficiency of its delivery in examining the results, by testing the learners (the products) and by inspecting the schools and teachers, grading them according to their national preset standards, interpreted by individual inspectors? Plato wanted such state control. France has such control and America certainly has more control than it admits by funding on results of state tests. My concern is, how far are we prepared to give this control to the state?

Denise is very clear in her mind that having stringent standards set by the state can have disastrous results as far as education is concerned. If we narrow education down to a set of requirements at each age then we reduce learning to achieving a list of preset objectives.

Denise: The [children] start to see learning not as something that is worth doing because I'm a human being and I am in the world, they see it as something to be accomplished and checked off as well. It becomes a meaningless exercise of 'we have to do this in order to be successful in third grade or fourth grade.' It becomes very much tied to that kind of accountability and not much to do with the real value of what learning is about as people.

In our conversation, Denise and I agree that we share values as to what is worthwhile which includes education more as a process rather than as a product, though we acknowledged that both are part of the concept. We agreed that education is worthwhile for itself not just as a ticket to something better (whatever that means) or as product that

you have and hold and barter with. But we both agreed on the uselessness of teachers repeating topics and not providing continuity, which happens when you do not have a prescribed curriculum. But that was secondary for both of us to the personal relationship between teacher and pupil. It is that dynamic that liberates teachers and children from all constraints and is the purpose of education.

Denise: It's so personal. As a teacher you have to understand that how you interact with your class, with each kid in this class that you have a tremendous amount of power and you do. Teachers, they are the dream makers.

David's comments about the state's role were much more accepting. He thinks a great deal of good has come from the strategies and the evaluations. Teachers are better prepared and there is a more complex understanding of the subjects we teach. David has received support and encouragement and received high grades for his school. He sees the balance between state legislation and professional judgement as a natural balance.

David: Suddenly these edicts come along and say that all 7-year-olds need to know this and that and so on. We know that is not necessarily true. They are a guide, of course – we need to adopt and adapt to suit the needs of the children. There is a lot of work that they have to get through and they seem to have to endure rather than enjoy lessons.

But he continues, "We *make* the time to do all the creative music and art and drama."

And this is obviously where David has scored both with the Ofsted inspections and with his own beliefs. He has fitted in what he is required to do but has made sure that he also fits in what he feels is equally important but not necessarily included in the requirements. He does not accept what is laid down that every 7 year old needs to know or should know, but he works towards that and has sufficient confidence to believe that he is doing what he believes is right for the children. His vindication of the state's role is partly due to the fact that he knows he is in control at the same time as he is fulfilling what is required. On the other hand, this is the teacher who tells the story of the 'ethos sensor,' related in Chapter 4.

Emily was teaching in a special school and her conversation took exactly the opposite point of view.

Emily: I feel very restricted in the state sector where I was unable to teach intuitively at the pupil's level and at their needs. I had a curriculum to get through and I had to show that I was doing that. There was no way that I could implement the sort of strategies that I knew from my professional training that I need to with these educationally dysfunctional pupils. Many were very disruptive. There didn't seem to be the understanding that children don't necessarily make linear progress. My professional opinion didn't seem to count for anything. Ofsted did not accept my reasoning or my planning. It was not sufficiently in line with requirements. I did not set myself up as an authority but I was trained as a teacher and I expected to use my professional judgement about what I, not everyone but what I could manage in these circumstances and under these conditions. It isn't only the paperwork that is overwhelming – it is accepting that this is what 11-year olds should have achieved. Who said so? Why are all children to be judged by the same standards, whose standards are they anyway? I saw exam results manipulated. I saw the goal posts moved.

Emily left teaching a year after our conversation. She found the paperwork and the inspections so overpowering that she could not fulfil her role as teacher. She was recognised by the special school where she worked as an exceptionally gifted teacher with difficult and disruptive pupils. She is an able musician and has a tremendous sense of dedication to her job. She clearly articulates the tension between her professional judgement and the state requirements. In the end she could not compromise sufficiently. Does this make her true to her ideals? I think she argues that she is. Is she using her professional judgement? Again she argues strongly for herself. Is she being arrogant about what children need to know or be able to do? Not at all, in my opinion, but her arguments could be so construed, just as her question of whose standards we are supposed to accept could be seen as a challenge. This is where the government has stepped in and named the standards and organised inspections so that individual ideas or what teachers clearly feel are professional judgements have much less importance than they should.

Frankie was deeply disturbed by the stress that the job was putting on her and other teachers. She said the children suffered too and that this was not what education should be about. She uses the word 'sad' many times, which reflects how she sees the state of education at the moment. Talking about assessment, Frankie uses both her own and the National tests for purposes of planning. She is interested in the data from National Tests but does not like the amount of time given up to preparation for the tests, the testing and the results. She attributes teachers' stress not to how the school or the teachers were addressing these concerns but to the test themselves; she saw no way out and finally gave up full time work through illness. She is a senior teacher working part time at the school and enjoys being involved in ways that helps the teachers get on with their work. She now does a lot of the administrative work, preparing reports, collating material for inspections and audits.

Frankie: It's all too prescribed. I think a lot of children are set up for failure at the moment, because of the emphasis on testing in particular areas. There is too much emphasis on preparing children for the test and not enough emphasis on enhancing the experience for the whole child.

Hannah is a new young teacher and she is worried about too much paperwork and not enough freedom to follow what she wants to do. She worries about losing interest because her enthusiasm will wane when there is too much have-to-do stuff and not enough space to create her own lessons. She left this school a year following this conversation to teach in a private school. About one of her friends she commented: "This one friend, she is doing incredibly well. She is following the rules. I am not following the rules." Following the rules was a real threat to her: "I am losing my ability to think for myself." She agreed that she could work creatively within the frameworks but added,

Hannah: We do have the freedom that if we can think of a way to teach the learning objectives as set out in the NC in a way that is different, and you can prove that it is equal to or better than the QCA, we are allowed to do that, except there is no time. I don't want to spend 6 weeks of my holiday doing that sort of

planning. I need that time to recover and to have the holiday to be able to start again in September.

Jill definitely worries about professional judgement.

Jill: The government makes more decisions and I wonder if we are a profession any longer. The whole issue about professional judgement is now becoming very murky. We are setting ourselves up as a profession with difficulties in the future. My concern is that I am not sure that it is recognised as a real problem.

She says that the worry about getting it all done and the paperwork involved “spoils the real thing”. She is prepared to carry the worry, but doesn’t want to, and she thinks less dedicated teachers either give up teaching or ‘do the job’ without trying to resolve the real needs of the children. Teachers “feel battered not nurtured.”

Liz puts her finger right on the target when she says,

Education isn’t just about the national state and our economy and all that kind of stuff, teachers have always been teaching and some were doing it brilliantly. As a profession we are losing our role. We need to have a greater respect for the children about what it is that should be learnt, as opposed to what they need to be coached in for the tests.

This is where the state versus the individual is clearly seen. It is not only about the individual child rather than the mass of the population, but also the individual professionally skilled teacher rather than the mass of teacher technicians.

Liz: Teachers do not have the time to accommodate all the differences. They have to use the strategies that are given to help them get through the vast amount of material. They cannot deviate because they have to have targets. If children haven’t grasped the essentials we have to spend time doing revision, revision, revision. This is different from taking the time to attend to each child...It is about this professional judgement. That is what has gone away in this subject specialisation and that is what we need to bring back. The emphasis of the past 10 to 15 years has been the de-skilling of the teachers.

We are in no doubt about whether Liz thinks the state has interfered too much.

Margaret brings in another very strong point of view when she talks about the average child.

It [the National Curriculum] doesn't leave enough room for treating them as individuals. I'm not quite sure how we can do it if we have to stick with the NC. It was better when a teacher really got to know each child and moved them along at their own pace. It might do for Mr. Average but it's not what children are, is it, average...It doesn't lend itself to anything individual or for people with real flair. It's like China and Mao's little red book.

A governor of a primary school and then of a vocational college, Mike, who is a business manager does not directly address the question of the state and the individual, but his comment articulates the confusion about what teachers are expected to be doing.

Mike: One wonders whether the politicians or the administrators have any real understanding and knowledge of the issues that the teachers and the head teachers go through on a day-to-day basis making decisions. We have established a National Curriculum and we now expect schools to achieve certain standards; and these would be measured from where they have started, from not from some totally arbitrary global standard that doesn't take any cognisance of where people have started from, then [would] leave the schools free to engage on their own. If they fall over then yes, intervene. If they don't, then let them get on with it. The constant interference, constant changing of rules, the constant moving of the goal posts makes it extremely difficult for teachers and head teachers to understand what the expectations are of them.

John had clear ideas about the importance of teacher's professionalism. He worked for the setting up of the General Teaching Council. One of the suites of rooms in the Birmingham building was named after him for his tremendous contribution shortly before his death in 2005. He was a friend I valued enormously and sadly missed for the further discussions that we planned. His conversation gave me a voice from an educator at the highest level of teacher education (Professor of Education at Warwick University) and it is one that helps me to formulate what it is that we mean by quality in education. The confidence I gained after this conversation is immeasurable. I feel that my thesis is

in line with the research that he felt was necessary in order to redress the balance of the teachers and the states role in education.

John: What really drives a good teacher is their conscience. What they are responsible to is their professional understanding and insight into the needs of their students and pupils. That is *paramount*. ...your own professional training and insight which you uniquely have as a teacher. The same time, because they are taking the shilling, they must do what the state requires. [Teachers] understand about people's learning and their training is devoted to that. You have got to be accountable. But it is a question of how to do that whilst still leaving room for personal judgement. And so you come back to this issue of judgement. Judgement is the essence of professionalism.

From these and other comments in the conversations I subsequently wrote dialogue one on the aims of education. What this first dialogue investigates is the stand we need to take if we are uncomfortable with too little or too much control. It is noticeable that the idea of moral integrity is becoming important to my thesis. The following is an extract where I discuss professional judgement with myself. (P stands for proponent and C is for a contrary voice.)

Dialogue 1: a discussion of aims.

P: There are two different dilemmas here. First there is the dilemma of the individual versus the state, which we will come back to since that is what we are talking about today, but in order to get there we have a dilemma about judgements.

C: Not Kantian philosophy please. Not now. It makes my brain hurt to try and fathom that stuff.

P: We don't need to do that deep stuff but we do need to ask ourselves what we mean by professional judgement. Just as you heard the critics of individualism so I hear the voices off stage saying, "Is this individual preference, whim, fancy? What makes it any different from intuitive response?" And of course we could spend another fortnight discussing this one. What I want to say is that professional judgement is based on the lifelong learning which includes all the specialised education in teaching as well as all

the experience of teaching as well as being cognisant of the immediate factors influencing the decision. It cannot be confused with whim, fancy, preference or reflex response. It is the exact opposite. It is what we as teachers are supposed to be doing. Professional judgement can also be exactly opposite to what you might want to do or be much more difficult than other easier options.

C: Don't I know that! It would be much easier to strangle.....

P: We are not going down that path! Nor at this point of our discussion do I want to get involved with using professional judgement to interpret the mandates. We both know that under the present regime of scheduling there is little room for interpretation. So, to get back to the individual versus the state, you spoke of aims. Perhaps that will help us.

C: I think it will because I see the aim of education as something intensely personal. The child and the teacher at their best possible moments in education are not aiming at improved economic power, the school's standing in the community, the parent's rights and responsibilities, the grading on the SATs, the marks on the next test or even the future of the world as we know it. The aim at this point is to realise something together take flight, to spark, to suddenly see what you didn't see before to make a discovery. It is heady stuff and you know it.

P: As Pádraig Hogan put it, 'an epiphany of learning'.

C: Now there's a phrase I could take to my heart and my head! That is the aim of education.

P: And you think this aim is different from the state's aim?

C: All we get is targets, tests and numbers. How can they possibly be the same as this almost spiritual something called an epiphany?

P: I agree entirely with the notion of 'sparking off' and 'taking flight'. This is the real buzz of teaching. But is this, and well planned, carefully structured teaching mutually exclusive? I always found that the more I planned, prepared and structured my lessons the more creative the children and I could be.

C: No, they are not mutually exclusive at all. But under the present regime we are sacrificing the 'flight' to the maintenance of the structure. This is where we are forced to abandon our ideals.

P: Come on now, we know that these are the few precious moments that we treasure, but the day in day out job of teaching is often less exciting. We have to admit too, that there have been many teachers, especially those in the heady days of the 70's when schools were not accountable in the way they are today, who were doing very little to enable pupils to make any discoveries except those that they happened upon through their own devices.

C: I suppose you are right. Your thesis on *Discovery Learning* certainly opened my eyes. But like you, I do believe that those moments of discovery are what we are aiming at. It is how to create the environment that best enables these moments to occur which is the basis of my disagreement with the present set up.

P: The present set up does not enable you to create such an environment?

C: It militates against it.

P: Explain yourself further.

C: Because we have a prescribed curriculum, which as I have said is no bad thing at all, but which proscribes deviation. Put that together with a timetable which prevents deeper and more thoughtful engagement by teacher or child, and we create an atmosphere somewhat like my mother's house on a Tuesday.

P: Now you are being obtuse.

C: She does her housework on a Tuesday and it is tightly timetabled to get it all done and she has no visitors and doesn't go out, doesn't answer the phone until it is all done. It is a chore, a once a week chore that she thinks is necessary but she really dislikes because she would like to be doing other things that really interest her.

P: Do you think this is the environment that is created by the tight schedules, the targets and the tests?

C: To be precise. Yes! The awful thing is that the analogy is true at the deeper level. The children and the teachers see it all as a chore, see it all as being necessary and there is that same attitude of 'let's get it done and then we can go outside and play.' The real teaching that I do is in the after school clubs and the two week summer school.

P: I think you have painted a very dramatic picture of the two extremes. I know they are

both true because I have found the same, but I think there is some middle ground where we could find good on both sides. The very act of planning and scheduling makes for far better lessons out of which these moments are likely to occur. Teachers who spend time in serious evaluation of where children are, what they have learned and where they need to be heading are the best teachers in every sense. But I agree that if the restrictions are so great that there is no room for the diversions or the spontaneity or more specifically that there is no time for digging deeper, then we have reduced the possibility of children making the kind of connections that we so earnestly want them to make.

C: We have to work with it. We have to try to be creative with the time and we have to be resolved not to care too much otherwise we would all resign. We do get highs and we do have terrible lows but for most of us we battle on. It is very difficult to be in a position of trust when you and the children have one idea and our 'dictators' have another. It would be all very well having the new business ethos pervading the place if we had an up-to-date business ethic, where the workers input is valued, but the trouble is it is an old-fashioned business ethos, where the workers had no input that they have in mind.

P: What do you think the state has as its aim for education?

C: It has made it quite clear that there is a minimum level to be attained by all children of a certain age. Schools and teachers are to be judged by the successes in the tests at each level. This is not in the interests of any particular individual, unless of course a particular individual has had their progress revealed in the tests, and remember that is not the case for *all* children, only those who score well. The interest remains to raise the level of education for all and no matter what the cost to individuals who do not make the acceptable level of progress.

P: But surely this is a most worthy aim, raising the level of education for all?

C: It is a worthy ideal and one I feel is necessary for individuality. But it is in the doing of it that the ideal gets swept under the carpet.

P: Along with all the other unwanted messy stuff that your mother might be concerned about on Tuesdays.

C: Despite your sarcasm, it is a good metaphor. The real purpose of a home is to be lived in and the real purpose of a school is to be a place of learning. Both are messy occupations and if we become over occupied with keeping it all in order it becomes a very uncomfortable place to live in. I am not saying that some discipline isn't necessary, because it is. Just as a home needs to be hygienic in the kitchen and bathroom so too do we need to be aware of what children need to know to be able to live in the world. But a bit of dust around the place doesn't do any harm especially if you are deeply engrossed in some project or interest. A home is not only a kitchen and a school is not only the necessary curriculum. They are both necessary parts and elements but not the heart of the home, not the heart of a school or indeed the heart of learning.

P: I like your metaphor. It implies that anything other than the National Curriculum is thought of as unnecessary fluff. The creative aspects of teaching and learning have all too often been relegated to fluff and sweeping them under the carpet is what I hear many teachers complain about.

C: One feels not just that creativity is squeezed out, in terms of the arts, but creativity in the entire curriculum.

P: What are the creative aspects of teaching - as opposed to the uncreative aspects? Isn't this different for different people? Are you accepting the concept of creative as unproblematic? Some people may find planning for phonics teaching creative. You mention the 'arts'. Is creativity related to content or process or both? Are particular curriculum subjects necessarily endowed with creativity and others not?

C: All these are good questions but this is turning the argument in another direction. What I am saying right now is that it is counterproductive for teachers to be creative in their thinking and planning. It is to be encouraged as long as they are within the prescribed curriculum such as phonics as you say. (And that is a hornet's nest in itself!) No, you will not make me digress. This is seriously where the individual and the state are at odds with each other. Their aims, quite simply put, in our present community, are not the same.

This dialogue encouraged me to reflect further on the necessity for a greater balance between state and individual claims on public education. Where either party feels aggrieved the children in our schools suffer, and since all parties argue for the best interests of the child, then it seems that logically we need to agree on the proper balance of power. What is appropriate, is of course open to debate.

Dialogue six: the concept of time. How does it affect worthwhile and instrumental ends?

The second dialogue I have selected is about the concept of time, and how that shapes our teaching in terms of the intrinsic or extrinsic ends of education. I never asked about time. I never mentioned intrinsic aims. It was another concept that came up dramatically in the first part of the conversations about what worries the teachers had in education. Time was constantly referred to, both in the above conversations already quoted but also in the following ones. I have selected entries for this chapter but every conversation mentioned pressure of time. It heralded for me a dialogue with deeper significance. It was not just about taking time to get to know children, giving time to other things than tests or giving too much time to one rather than another. All these were rightly the teachers' concerns, but they arose from frustration with a philosophy of education that they felt organised times *for* them in a way they could not support.

Sue M, head teacher in Oxfordshire: I speak out for children and children's' learning at every opportunity. My staff is encouraged to think about their own children and their needs and direct their teaching specifically to real children. I really do not care what SATs results we get, provided the children have made progress in their ability to access knowledge and their thinking skills. But more and more people I used to respect now talk the 'new talk', and teachers arriving from training know no different. I do think there is a major acceptance of this 'new talk' because it is easier to accept than to do other things. But we have something which we never used to have, which is *complete* time constraint. Everything is timed. Now *everything* is timed. My staff, even my excellent teachers, is very aware and know they have to do something at such and such a time and stop at such and such a time. They are frightened that should Ofsted inspectors arrive they might be 'told off' even if I am quite clear and firm about

my wishes. In other schools where they are a bit more blindly accepting, it's far worse. You could actually know what every child is doing at every moment of the day.

Sue is acutely aware of the restriction placed on her and her school in terms of time, more than any other factor. It interferes with her aims for herself and her school. She sees education as deeper and more intense than anything prescribed for in the National Curriculum and though she is adamant that the school does cover the required *curriculum* and as a result does fairly well on test results, she is not concerned with those results because she is confident enough to know she is making the right choices for the children. Never the less, time is the one thing above all that beats her in her endeavours. She is frustrated in her professional aims, which she describes as intrinsic.

Cindy, a class teacher in Texas, has worries about giving a child too much time just because she felt so badly for him:

It is a very thin line between professional responsibility and one's own personal feelings for the children. It bothers me to get it right. I have a kid this year who is very low. He has a single mother dying of cancer who is having all sorts of treatments. She has been in to see me several times to see how she can help him. But this kid is not trying himself. I give him a bit of slack but then I have to let him know when enough is enough. Today for instance I sent him to the office. Even he has to know there are consequences.

Cindy has problems with time. There isn't enough of it. She wants to give more time to special cases and then finds she feels guilty about the other children. She needs the time for the extrinsic aims of getting children prepared for the tests and prepared for the next grade. She is under pressure from her principal to keep this foremost in her aims.

Kathy, speech pathologist working full time in a school in Texas:

I feel that sometimes we just don't have the time to talk to children. In my position being in speech I do have time to talk to them and I make it a priority too. I feel strongly that oral language is the basis of all academics. If you don't work on oral language, if you are not proficient in oral language you will not

develop as a strong writer and you certainly need to be able to write well. Strong skills in oral language and the ability to write allow a child to apply experience to other areas. So many times I go to a teacher and ask, "How are they doing?" especially if I am getting a student ready for dismissal from the programme. "Have you noticed this or that where we have been working really hard?" Then they will say, "Oh! I don't have the time and I never really talk to the children." Now that concerns me greatly.

Here we have an analysis of how to spend time wisely with children. Kathy's philosophy is if you have only so much make sure it is really well spent. Quality time is something she understands from the modern idiom. She sees the role of speech as both aiming for instrumental ends as well the intrinsic value of communication within education. I echo Kathy's concerns for teachers who do not have the time to talk with their pupils. Christie, in the next example, certainly shares this view.

Christie, a special needs teacher in Texas: Talking has a most important role in learning too. Communicating. Teacher and student need to be able to communicate with one another, they should be talking to each other, as this is what forms the relationship. A student spends most of the day with one teacher and they need to feel close, feel free to discuss anything. Communicating with each other is the basis of personal interaction. Teachers who don't give this enough time, who don't have this level of personal communication tend to be the ones who rely more on pencil and paper work with students sitting in the seats.

In Christie's class she made time for talking despite stringent targets set for each child's Individual Educational Programme (IEP). She would have pupils from regular classes for set periods for special work (reading or writing for instance). The pupils' progress was remarkable. I make that comment based on my experience with pupils she worked with from my class.

Michelle, a newly qualified teacher in Texas, feels that the classroom is sacrosanct and a place where she will make good things happen in spite of all the 'unnecessary' interruptions of bureaucracy. Using her time for the individual is where she sees her role as a teacher. Time is not to be wasted, whether it is for getting them through the tests or for life-long learning:

Michelle: We have lots of students whose teachers have tried to get children tested for special services because they are obviously struggling in the classroom and they need more one-on-one time than the class teacher can give them. When you have 20 kids it's hard to give those who are struggling all the extra one-on-one time that they need.... My frustrations in education are not to do with the kids, but with the administration. I have my door closed and I have my kids to myself and I love it. It's wonderful and so rewarding. It really is all the other stuff that you have to deal with that gets to me... For me education is working with the kids. That's what it is really all about. Getting to know each one individually on an individual personal basis. Where you know what each child is capable of in each area of the curriculum. That's what we are here for, working one-on-one and in groups so that they can build on their abilities.

Sue Veach, team leader in a Texas school, is concerned that in meeting the needs of the tests teachers might miss some of the really important things in life. The emphasis by the administration on results is too 'costly':

Sue: In the state of Texas there is a lot of emphasis on testing and I don't think education should be about testing.... Education should not be about *a single* test and that test's results. But I find myself spending a lot of time thinking about the test, how the questions are worded and I worry about the kids coming across something that I know I have taught them but because it is presented in a different way they have very high anxiety over the test. They know it's important all year long but on testing day they are scared to death. They know they have to do well they know they were marked on it all year long and that we have parent meetings about it, they hear about it on the radio or TV. The school district expects performance at *all costs*, basically.

Kerry, a class teacher in New York state, cannot believe that time is expected to be spent on the minutiae of immediate aims at the expense of the long-term effects. It is something she is not prepared to give too much time to despite regulations. She keeps her aims on the long term, the worthwhile:

Two years ago my principal started having grade level meetings in second grade so we can go over the Terra Nova (standardized test given in grade 2 and 3 at my school, similar to the ITBS that we gave in Texas) scores from the previous year.

He wanted to go over individual questions and find out how to get better results. He would say, "Let's look at question #12. 93% of our second graders got it correct let's figure out why those 7 % missed it! We are all sitting there with our mouths open ready to scream. This is the first experience with a bubble-in test for our 7 year olds and he wants to know why 7% got a question wrong.

Lynn K, a class teacher in Texas, is totally committed to getting children 'where they need to be' and will take the time and all the steps necessary to achieve this. She sees a different problem with time. When giving time and dedication to one (or two) really difficult student(s) she has found this often backfires because the time and support is not given in subsequent years. But she does attend to the immediate aims in the hope that this is the year that the child succeeds so well, 'it sticks with him':

This year I just had a boy that we worked with so hard and he passed all three parts of the TAAS. I got individual work for him and I said he's still not ready to go on. But since he passed the TAAS, he goes onto the next school. I feel if we had one more year together he could make it. With support he can do it. I know that he is not going to get four teachers to help him the way we have this year. I did such a good job in getting him confident that I end up screwing the kid up because now he is not retained and he won't get the support next year. I feel good that he is so confident. He said, "Hey! I'm smart now!" This is the best story. I just love it!

Investment of time in the least or most able students (or any particular individual or small group) is a practical rather than philosophical issue for most teachers. It is yet another reflection of commitment; the belief that you do invest time, your own time, in order to do the best that you can. It is also a political issue with special needs, gifted, ESL, and many other groups each demanding time for their special concerns.

Sara, a parent and teacher-helper in Gloucestershire, explained that she believed that taking time was most important for teachers in their dealings with children. It came through very clearly in the way teachers dealt with parents and helpers. She told me this was why she did not choose one school.

The teacher was busy and yes, there were lots of children.... She should have had time to take me through what was going on... She was rushed. It didn't feel right with her. She rushed the children; there never seemed enough time.

Dialogue 6: the concept of time.

P: We have to discuss this question of time.

C: There's a big one!

P: What we are interested in is the concept of time in education.

C: Is it different from other uses of time?

P: It is a particular context and as such deserves some special consideration by us.

C: Time well spent. A waste of time. Time to play, time to work. Time out! Good timing and before one's time and so on. We need to get the dictionary out here. It has a large number of very interesting entries under time.

P: That would be fascinating and I know it is because I have done it. It was for a translation into French and it was interesting to find whether we had the same idioms, phrases and metaphors using time.

C: Did you learn anything to help you with educational time?

P: Lots of things really but the most interesting were the entries for timeless which means unaffected by time, or unchanged by time and timely meaning at the right or opportune time.

C: Why these in particular?

P: In my conversations with teachers and others involved in education these two ideas were most often a source of concern and I wanted to discuss them with you.

C: The timelessness of these essentially contested concepts I suppose.

P: Yes. It is the idea that education as a good in itself, as something worthwhile, has been with us for as long as written history. It wasn't education for all people at all those times of course but for whoever got it, it was valued and valuable. Today's teachers feel exactly the same. And this is where time enters the conversation. It is an unchanging idea this worthwhileness but at the same time the constraints of time seems to prevent

teachers putting that idealism into practice. They don't like the idea that education is part of the rat race of performances that are essential to getting on and having a good job and living comfortably and so on. Education seems to be above all that, even though it is involved very intimately with all that too.

C: That certainly makes it an interesting idea to discuss. Do all teachers think like that?

P: Well of course I can't talk for all teachers but those who discuss these things with me were of one accord on this. They went so far as to say that only those teachers who felt like this, should be teachers. Now that's a tall order isn't it?

C: I should say so. How could we go about finding out for one if that is what they truly believe and two, how would you evaluate how far they lived up to that ideal in the classroom? And there's a third question. Could we teach it to those who are to be teachers of the next generation?

P: Well said! You have put it all in a nutshell. So to begin with, would you agree that this is an essential requirement for teachers? Are they acting on their belief that education is valued and valuable in its own right?

C: What is the alternative? That they think education is useful for something else beside itself? And I suppose the constraints of time are more readily accommodated when you think of education in this framework.

P: I think the time issue can be dealt with differently when we think of education being useful for other things.

C: Well it is. Education is useful for others things. We use education for gaining confidence, independence, qualifications, higher qualifications, a better job, and more money...

P: Yes, yes, I suppose the list is almost endless because we cannot think of anything we do that is not influenced by what we learn. What I mean here is that when we think in these terms about education it is much easier to make the connection with what is measurable and quantifiable. For instance, if I register for ski instruction, I expect to receive instruction that will enable me to ski, and to do so in the set amount of time that the course runs for. I am truly a customer who pays for something and expects to receive it at the time promised.

C: So education for the purposes of learning a skill comes under a different scheme of things than what for instance?

P: Come on! Education is not only about instruction; we have visited that one before. That is a small part of the big picture. It might be a very important part when I give instructions about the fire drill to my primary age class but it is important for their physical safety rather than their intellectual development. The areas of importance to intellectual development are where we encourage questioning, doubting, experimenting and so on.

C: Don't you think they could be part of instruction too?

P: Any teacher is going to be encouraging 'active learning behaviour'. That was a phrase used in my Texas evaluation. Whether it is instruction for a test, instruction for the use of computers or instruction on how to do a research project on your own.

C: Wait a minute you are confusing me now. Instruction and research projects don't seem to belong in the same bed do they?

P: What our goals are, and what we are preparing our pupils for, are very different. Instruction is telling what to do, and even a bit of how to do it, but not the whole story. I can instruct my pupils to do an individual project on a scientist who lived in the nineteenth century. I can instruct them as to where the library is and how to look up stuff in books and the Internet and how to phrase questions to ask people to help them. I can instruct them to think up their own questions. What would you have asked your scientist? How could you explain recent progress that supports or defies his theories?

C: And of course this is where time comes back into the argument. If you have a set of theories that you want the children to have knowledge of, you could plan a timetable to cover all the important points and then test and have time to review and so on. If you are trying to evaluate your kind of project you have little to go on except what the child turns up with and whether in your judgement it was perceptive enough.

P: A very different approach to learning and very different demands on time. Examining how teachers use their time and talk about time reveals whether they think education is worthwhile in itself. Some of the teachers, who were more in line with the government policy on the curriculum, felt that time was a problem, but the problem was "fitting it all

in.” That gives me the impression that education for them is a quantifiable entity that can or cannot be fitted into a time frame. If we don’t know how big it is how can we say whether it will fit or not?

C: A logical point but one that misses the reality of life and particularly school life. We are not in the business of giving everything to everybody you know. We are in state schools with limited time and resources and...

P: You have missed the point. No! Come to think of it, perhaps you have *made* my point for me. How could we think we are giving everything to everybody when we don’t know what everything is? The whole point is, that individual development, individual education, is never completed. It is an ongoing process. We should be more bothered about the qualities of the process and stop worrying about how much or how long will it take.

C: You are living in an idealistic world where we can choose to go to school and choose to do as we like and possibly choose not to do anything at all. This is ridiculous!

P: You mean like A. S. Neill’s school Summerhill?

C: That is not a state school and it could only have existed if there were enough crackpots to send their kids and their money out for a ride.

P: Do you know that in many ways it was very successful? Children ran their own council, took charge of their affairs very competently, and most did extremely well in state exams, once they put their minds to it. Neill certainly saw education as a process of development with highly individual stages, which he and his staff were willing to accommodate. There are many stories of such individualism where children who are out of synch with their peers do extremely well once they are supported at their differing levels. Deakin (1973), in his book *Children on the Hill* revealed that a mother home schooled her family with incredible success, using the local state schools eventually to integrate the children into the exam system for placements at university.

C: So you want me to believe that plenty of time equals a great education.

P: How wonderfully succinct you are at times! Plenty of time with the right goals and the right teachers is one thing, plenty of time to have no guidance, no support, no place to aim, is a waste of time. But stressed time, compressed time and anxious times, strict

time tables and testing procedures, do not seem to uphold this ideal we have of regarding each individual as having their own right time, their own timeliness and their own right to timelessness.

C: Can I see a theory breaking out?

P: I don't know about a theory, but education is certainly about how we spend our time. And within that broad statement are hundreds of time related questions and ideas that contribute to our own view of both time and education and how they relate to each other. I am coming to the view that not only is education intimately related to time, but also the concept of quality in education is dependent on two further fundamental concepts. One is time and the other is care. We will go on to talk about care in another conversation. How we view education is very much how we view the use of time.

C: So, if we think of education as a means of getting somewhere else for instance, then there is a time limit? I don't think that stands up logically at all.

P: No, it's not a time limit as such, but it is seen in a time frame of certain duration; for example our school years. They start at 5 and end at 18 and in that time there is a certain stock of knowledge, a certain portfolio of experiences that are considered desirable. There are tests to find out how well you have done, and there are evaluations to find out how well the school has done.

C: Well, there's certainly nothing wrong with that. It's called accountability, whichever way you look at it.

P: No, there is nothing wrong with accountability and there is nothing wrong in setting goals for our children and for evaluating how we are doing. All good teachers do this all the time and our excellent teachers couldn't imagine living by any other standards than their self-imposed accountability. Where the difference lies is in closing the goals down to short term ones and not seeing the continuity that evolves into education of the full potential of each individual. It is a tunnel vision that we have discussed under our aims of education. Seeing all of the school experience at no matter what stage, as part of something much bigger and better than getting through this in order to get that, takes on a whole different flavour don't you think?

C: I don't think time and flavour go very well together. But I do get some inkling of what you are hinting at. Explain it a bit more.

P: If we see education as something worthwhile in itself, we don't need all the stages and tests to validate what we are doing. Time is not the circumscribing parameter of what we are about. We are about doing something that is right at this time, for this child, and it sometimes takes longer than at others and often occurs at awkward times too. If we miss the moments, those special moments that we have so often talked about, we have missed an opportunity to create a new horizon for a child, and often for ourselves at the same time. If the intervening stages, which are a necessary skeleton of our school curriculum, are to be above the importance of this kind of development, then time has shaped our concept of what it is right to do at this time and at this moment for this child.

C: If we adhere to the timetable we are damned!

P: And if you don't adhere to the timetable you will probably lose your job. This is not what is in the best interests of children, teachers, or society. It means that teachers who are really excellent at their work, and really care about their students, are the very ones that will get worn down by the conflicting claims upon their professional lives. We know this is happening already.

C: We do. We had two newly qualified teachers last year in our school and one has left the profession, the other is struggling to make ends meet.

P: Lots of teachers fall by the wayside and we all know that the first year of teaching is the most unimaginably difficult year of your life.

C: I should be more specific. The one, who was outstanding in every way and loved the job simply could not believe the inspector's report on our school. She was so disillusioned about what she felt was right, and at odds with what was expected of her, that she felt she could not teach in a state school. She has gone to teach in a special unit in a private school. What a loss to us that was!

P: There are many examples of teachers who struggle with the requirements and find they follow the law, dodge around it a bit, or evade it and take the consequences.

C: That's life!

P: Do you really think that we should be asking professional people to compromise their judgement?

C: Not exactly.

P: Well what exactly?

C: Well, we all have to learn to give and take a bit in life. We can't have it all our own way.

P: No one is suggesting such a thing. And I do not see it as a bit of give and take. I see the fundamental requirements are at odds with professional judgement and that is simply not acceptable. It is no good saying, "use your judgement and 'deliver' it as you prefer," when you will be evaluated on results which, are tied to the strategies and recommendations.

C: You are too adamant about this. There is room for you to teach in your own way.

P: As long as it is seen to be efficient and effective and gets the children through the tests.

C: Well, getting them through the tests is recommended because experts have agreed that this is what children should know and understand.

P: Experts they may be but they are not experts with my class of children. The interest and enthusiasm for the National Curriculum is really praiseworthy. Teachers have agreed they have learned so much from these documents. They also feel that there is too much pressure to get the facts stuffed in by a certain age and this is where we come back time and time again to time itself. If we don't have the right to exercise our professional judgement, and if we don't have the time to think about it because of the amount of work that has to be done, then, time is what is preventing us from doing our job as teachers the way we think we should be doing it.

C: So you think it is a clever ploy by the government to keep you so busy that you don't have time to think for yourself?

P: Possibly, but that's a bit cynical, although a viable point of view. I think that in the effort to raise standards for all children, which is praiseworthy in itself, they have missed the point that they are children. This goes back to our conversation on mini adults and to our conversation on what education is, and what it's for. They have seen the great

strides in business thinking and applied them across the board to schools. In making this slide from one discipline to another the essential differences have been pushed under the carpet so that the appearance is neat and tidy. It means that effectiveness, efficiency and improvement, all work hand in hand, but it is only right if you think of schools as places of business and education as a commodity.

I look now in more detail at dialogue seven on the concept of care. It was from these comments and the subsequent debate in the dialogue that I formed my argument on the principle of moral integrity. Teachers clearly expressed the need for care in their comments on excellent teachers. It is a commitment to children, not just a commitment to their job. It is a genuine concern for them as individuals. In talking about excellent teachers these comments were offered:

Margaret: They *cared* about the children and saw them as individuals.

Sara: The overall picture is they are proud of where they are working, they have the children's interests at heart, and they really *care* about them.

Crissie: An excellent teacher, a teacher of the very highest quality will really look after the kids, care for their needs and enrich their environment. It is what we should all be doing.

Sue V: She would be up on the latest thing but most of all she must *care* about the kids and really care about what they learn

Christie: I care about their education but I want them to learn that each one is important to me; I care about their quality of life.

Ethel: You teach their hearts and then you can teach their heads. If you have a loving environment, children will learn because they feel safe.

Frankie was near to tears as she explained: 'Some of them [the children] are particularly vulnerable, you know like a dyslexic child who can't read the papers or knows they can't write as well as anybody else. Perhaps they're talented in sport or artistically or something that is untested. They can't say, "Look, I've got to level 5." I just think it's sad.'

The teachers conveyed an underlying sense of caring about what they were doing and what children needed that was not directly spoken but always implied. It is this sense of acceptance that this is what teachers should be doing and what they are required to do to be excellent teachers that is something they reveal of themselves and their commitment. Michelle simply tells me, "I have my door closed and I have my kids to myself and I love it. It's wonderful and so rewarding", whereas Lynn K says, "I think teachers are called to do this work, it's a kind of sensitivity. You have to be sensitive to the children and what they're coming in with." She combines professional skill with the description of moral obligation that is entailed in teaching. For John, self knowledge precedes and prepares the way for a moral understanding of education:

John: I am interested in helping people grow and have a deep sense of understanding of themselves and the world, and in doing that, feeling more and more understanding and compassion for others.

I include part of dialogue seven to show how I debated some of the above issues.

P: It is because words change their importance, or even their meaning by their use and abuse, that we have to be vigilant when we read about education. You note I use the word vigilant, because I mean that you can't be too careful about these matters. If we care about education it is because we value it. Part of caring is sometimes to put yourself on the line.

C: It is all about what we value in our lives, what we think is worth paying attention to, and in the extreme, what it is worth fighting for and being passionate about.

P: Is paying attention the same as caring?

C: It is in a way, because we pay attention to those things that we care about. If we are not careful then we can soon lose the habit of caring. I like those two uses of the word. We use them so much and they have differences that are worth commenting on. Being careful is just an everyday term about looking after yourself, or crossing the road with your eyes open. It doesn't really mean full of care in the sense you are talking about.

We have to say things like 'taking great care' or 'being extra careful' to get that sense of 'full of care'.

P: It is all about what we value in our lives, what we think is worth paying attention to and in the extreme what it is worth fighting for and being passionate about.

C: Now there's something I can identify with. I am passionate about children and their vulnerability, and I am in awe of the task of teaching them.

P: The philosophical problem here is a practical one. By that I mean that what we value, what we feel is worth fighting for, may or may not be shared by others. The delusional, the fundamentalist, the conservative, the insufferably non-passionate people who we find in the educational world, are all entitled to their own opinions and their own system of values. They will fight for what they believe is worth fighting for. How do we know that we are not one of those? How do we establish what is worth fighting for and whether it is for the good of our schools?

C: Well I suppose we start by trying to understand what our schools are for. What is their purpose?

This dialogue underlines how inter-related all of the dialogues are. The concepts of time and care are understood in terms of the aims of education. The three dialogues examined here show the inter-connections and also how the fundamental ideas on education will determine the stance taken on quality. The concept of care is one of the most important discussions because it clearly indicates moral commitment of the individual teacher to the task of teaching as a moral undertaking in itself. . I return to dialogue seven on the concept of care, in the next chapter.

There are five more dialogues in which I argue about whether childhood is more than a preparation for being adult, the balance between long and short-term goals, the concept of quality, and the usefulness of the business model and size of school. These are presented in Appendix B. Each gave me the opportunity to think through the different arguments that I found in the conversations and the texts read; each one was an

important aspect of understanding quality. I discuss the valuing of childhood as distinct from simply being a preparation for adulthood, the place of professional judgement in balancing long and short terms goals, the business model which leaves important aspects of quality untouched, and the pros and cons of a small school. They represent a synthesis of my thinking and are a vital part of my educational and philosophical development. I include only three dialogues in this chapter because these are germane to the proposal of a tentative theory that I will pursue on the next two chapters.

After writing the dialogues, I had a clearer understanding of my concerns. I had seen that there are two sides to the argument of responsibility, both that of the state and of the teacher, and both need proper attention. The real question was not who should have more or less control, but how the balance should be achieved. On the question of size of school, I too had shifted from my original position from believing size was of prime importance to an interest in how each teacher managed to create the best environment needed for education to thrive.

Self-study

At the time I was writing the dialogues, I was introduced to the idea of self-study through the work of Loughran, Russell and LaBosky (2004). Self-study is a recognised methodology, which ascribes value to scrutinising one's assumptions, perspectives and prejudices. It is particularly related to teacher education practices. Loughran, Russell and LaBosky (2004), delineate four aspects of the methodology. It is improvement aimed, it is interactive, it employs multiple qualitative methods and it makes its results available for further judgement. My thesis is aimed at improvement of understanding of what is involved in teaching and learning. I intend to improve as I study and learn in the process of doing the research. The dissemination of my ideas also aims at improving the understanding of quality in education. Although the dialogues are not part of the interactive research with the teachers, they are the results of such interaction. The conversations are the interactive element, as are my supervision meetings and

correspondence with my supervisors. I have already sought judgement from teachers and will do so again before the thesis is completed. This sort of self-study has been criticised for being 'narcissistic' but the explanation given by Cole and Knowles (1996) on the nature and intention of self-study answers that point.

What is "self-study of teacher education practice"? What is the broad intention of those who engage in self-study of teacher education practices? Although the self-study of teacher education practices takes many forms, broadly speaking, it has two main purposes. Teacher educators, many of whom were classroom teachers prior to entering the academy as university-based educators, engage in self-study both for purposes of their own personal-professional development and for broader purposes of enhanced understanding of teacher education practices, processes, programs, and contexts. Sometimes both of these purposes are made explicit in self-study work; sometimes one is implicit in the other. The purposes are not mutually exclusive. The former purpose typically has a largely practical (often pedagogical) focus and is usually self-oriented in that the general aim relates to the ongoing improvement of one's own (pedagogical) practice. The latter purpose has a broader aim more generally related to the production and advancement of knowledge about teacher education practices and the programs and contexts within which they are situated. Both purposes have to do with refining, reforming, and rearticulating teacher education. (Cole and Knowles 1996, p 217).

I would like to think that my thesis would impact teacher education in that it should prompt ways of thinking about quality other than those that are scored by inspectors. Teachers' professional judgement has had to take second place to the authority of the state at present. Redressing the balance will surely come in time I hope, and this research is in part an effort to redirect thinking towards the role of professional judgement within the framework of standards and testing that is well established

The self-study methodology is an ideally suited to this part of the thesis where I write dialogues as a form of reflection and self critique. I gave a paper at the Self Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-Step) conference in June 2004 held at Herstmonceux Castle, Sussex. I wanted to learn from and contribute to the methodology of self-study and I wanted to get feedback from an interested audience about the usefulness of the

dialogues. I include part of the introduction to the published paper here. In order to place myself in context, I wrote:

I used to think that I never had enough time to get my ideas sorted out. There was always another argument forming in my mind just as I thought I had got something straight. I had some mythical notion that given time I could get my ideas 'sorted out once and for all'. ... As a teacher and a mother I was constantly confronted with immediate tasks that demanded decisions without the time, let alone space, for deeper thinking. So my head has been buzzing and ready to burst with passionate arguments, the 'quick' repartee (thought of about a week later), the half-remembered quote from Plato or Dewey and plans to write things down, plans to attend a course where I might have time to think, plans to be quiet, plans.... After thirty-five years in the classroom ... I realise that I will never have enough time to get my ideas 'sorted out once and for all'. Not because I will never have the time but because such a state of mind is never going to happen. I have realised that the foundation of my unending love affair with philosophy is because it is simply never ending. Philosophy is the conversation with others and myself that always ends with, 'but on the other hand'. (Stagg-Jones, 2004, p 229.)

In the paper I explain further how I saw the dialogues as a means to understand self-study as a methodology. I explained the dialogues and gave examples from them and argued that the writing of the dialogues was a worthwhile attempt to reflect and edit and re-write. In so doing, I was examining my deepest concerns about teaching and learning which had brought about an awareness of my assumptions and some progress towards my understanding of the concept of quality. I argued that it was a valid form of self-study. As with all self-study there are others involved (Russell and Loughran, 2005). Collaboration of one kind or another is essential; self-study is not simply sitting alone reflecting. I did sit alone and write but then submitted my dialogues to my supervisors for comment. Roy Corden, one of my supervisors, played an essential part in this stage of my study. His detailed examinations of each dialogue and his arguments at every turn were what fuelled the energy of each dialogue. The examination of critical friendships for the purpose of research is discussed in the article by Schuck and Russell (2005), and they show the interdependence of self and others in discovering strengths and weaknesses in teaching practices:

Because self-study is an inherently critical activity that seeks to challenge one's fundamental assumptions about personal professional practice, we believe that a critical friend should take risks and be as critical as possible. (Schuck and Russell, 2005, p 120.)

Although I was not writing directly for teacher educators, nor for specific practices, but about my teaching beliefs and practices, I too show the interdependence of colleagues, especially critical colleagues. This was evident in Roy Corden's role as a supervisor. In my particular case I was sitting alone reflecting on the conversations and how they had affected my thinking, but this was the writing up stage after the interactions and collaboration had taken place. The style of the writing up, using the dialogue form, is unusual; but like the writing up of notes after meetings or other interactions, the writing up is done in the space and time allocated for yourself on your own. Both parts, the active interaction and the solitary writing up of the interaction, are important to self study as they were to this part of my thesis.

The feedback I received from presenting my paper for discussion at the conference, made me look at the claims of TQM again, from a different perspective. I was encouraged by the interest that was shown. Stories of success were related where TQM had had a very positive effect on the teamwork and leadership in schools. It was perceived as a very useful non-competitive, management programme for getting teachers and administration to collaborate. I felt inspired by the enthusiasm for personal challenge that self-study stimulates which was in evidence at this conference. Jack Whitehead was particularly excited by my approach to quality as it was a concept he explored in his book, *Action Research: Living Theory* (2006). With special reference to Morwenna Griffiths' presentation *Collaboration and Self-Study in Relation to Teaching Social Justice Issues to Beginning Teachers* (2004), Whitehead thought it was not only a significant contribution to self study methodology, but an example of 'Living Theory' itself. In a follow up e-mail after the conference (2004) he wrote to me:

[Morwenna] was expressing a loving passion for her work. I wish I'd got a video-clip to replay and show others what a living standard of educational judgement grounded in embodied values looks like.

This conference gave me the encouragement and confidence to continue with my studies along the lines of 'the difficult to describe, but definitely recognisable' concept of quality in education. The dialogues do not give me answers but the inconclusiveness is an indication of their philosophical nature. This grappling with the tensions however leads to a deepening and re-orienting of thought that can lead to more justifiable and more fruitful forms of action than might otherwise have been possible. Critical conversations at the conference gave me further lines to pursue and some possible resolutions.

In this chapter I have argued for self-study as a recognised method within a philosophical framework, and I claim that dialogues are a part of philosophical investigation. These dialogues enable me to synthesise the many perspectives I found in the conversations and the texts. They are of fundamental importance to the thesis in that they move the argument from others to myself. I see clearly what I value because those very things were being under valued, devalued or not valued at all. I clarify my underlying beliefs about education and find the rationale for an alternative theory of quality. This close self examination and discussion of the issues raised by the teachers, leads me to propose the possibility of a theory of quality, a theory that is based on the quality that is put *into* teaching rather than the quality of measurable results.

CHAPTER 7

PROPOSING A THEORY: from conversations to principles

I summarise in this chapter the preceding stages of the argument, review confusing language use in the concept of quality and refer to the methodological stance I have taken. I proceed to show the beginnings of a theory of quality drawn from the conversations, the philosophical review and subsequent dialogues. I then move from generalisations gathered from the conversations, and refined in the dialogues, to considering the stories and the possibility of principles that energise them. I argue for two principles which are entirely dependent on the stories, namely acting with moral integrity and awareness of unpredictable outcomes.

This research is concerned with the problem that is engendered by having two meanings of quality that are distinctly different but are often used as if they were the same. In this vein I have been explaining how quality does not only mean the achievement of predetermined standards but it also means going beyond those standards. The latter is a more commonly accepted use of the concept of quality in ordinary language, the former is the tight definition used in the manufacture of products. These two different meanings have different functions in the language but they are often used interchangeably. Because of this, much of what we want to talk about in educational terms of high quality in the ordinary sense of quality is circumscribed by the use of measurements or checklists which are implied in the more technical use of the word.

The literature I read gave a background to the philosophical, educational and business use of the concept of quality, and the conversations continued the discussion on what quality might mean in practice. My argument gained momentum by hearing other teacher's stories exemplifying quality. I was also challenged by the ideas and language that some of teachers had taken on board, or had made their own: for example, Liz in her conversation has no problem with the business model and uses the concept of 'product' meaning 'the yield.' The independent evidence that I bring to this argument is the testimony of those teachers. These testaments, and particularly their stories, furnished me with examples of quality from which I wrote dialogues that enabled me to synthesise my ideas on education and quality. The dialogues give the argument a new direction by shifting to my own interpretations and perspectives.

Language

The slipperiness between the different meanings of quality is compounded by a further slipperiness between quality as a concept, and qualities as characteristics. This has led to further distraction and often confusion. How would we measure 'care', for instance, in the question 'How much do you care?' A caring person has many ways of being judged caring but is there an accurately measurable difference between them? There are degrees of more or less caring which I agree are in some sense measures, but there is not, nor could there be, an accurate uniform measurement of a caring person. I return later in this chapter to the concept of care. A suspicious person is perhaps easier to deal with. You either are or you are not. There are difficulties in having any sort of measures of innocence or virginity. (Though there are broader notions of innocence, as in gradually losing one's innocence, and there may be degrees of virginity when taken as meaning unspoiled or untouched.) Concepts like trustworthiness, truthfulness and reliability are all determined by our actions and words in relationships not by measurements. And if it is argued that you can count and weigh up the number of times a friend is trustworthy, truthful, or reliable in order to come to a judgement about these characteristics, then I answer that once may be enough to destroy trust, or truth. And I would further claim

that by counting how many times my friend, teacher or child is reliable is entirely missing the point. Sometimes I may judge instances of untruthfulness or untrustworthiness to be forgivable, sometimes not. (Certainly with teaching and parenting we cannot know the long-term outcomes of these judgements so monitoring and evaluation are somewhat redundant.) I would not know how to answer if I were asked whether I would trust someone who was disloyal 10% of the time. Worthwhileness cannot be measured except in terms of what you value. 'Moral integrity' and 'quality education' would come under the same scrutiny.

I have already argued in Chapter 5 that there is a difference between product quality and measures of value. Further to this I add that we differentiate between good or bad quality in many ways: function, form, usefulness, immediacy, availability are just a few candidates among others. Although we can say by how much, or how far, a specific definition of quality fulfils my requirements and thus introduce a notion of quantifiability, it is a different quantifiability from how good, bad or indifferent this carpet or piece of furniture is. I do not want to treat education as a product, and not only because I think there are different ways of valuing education, but also because there are different ways of evaluating it. When we are referring to quality of products we can lay down parameters into which these things must fit. We can say 'This is a high quality carpet' because it has x number of tufts per square centimetre, or 'This cloth is inferior quality' because it has only x number of threads per square centimetre. But we cannot say 'This is a work of art' because it fetched a million pounds in the auction, or that somebody liked it enough to buy it for that price. There are quantifiable links with most of our concepts because it is a human activity to categorise and classify so that we can understand better, but the categorisation or the parameters laid down are arbitrary, up to a point, because somebody has decided on them rather than somebody else. These are all measures of value. We expect to have standards for our electrical appliances to make them safe for us to use. This kind of standardising products and bringing uniformity to the market place is what the Government wants to bring to education: standardisation and a certain amount of uniformity. Government documents may use the words

‘entitlement’ and ‘consistency’ because they are less emotional and more specific to the political aims of making education more available and equitable, but the thrust of both notions is undoubtedly standardisation. I argued in the literature review that giving teachers the ‘freedom to be creative’ in their interpretation and delivery of the set curriculum counts for little when the results are evaluations which are pre-set and inflexible.

In education, quality now means one of three things: achieving predetermined standards, going beyond those standards, or in some cases quality is the name of a job, and nothing to do with either of the above. For example, what is a quality worker? There are three possible answers. It is someone who does exactly what is required and no more, or someone who always goes the extra mile, or it is someone who is employed in the standards and inspection department, as in a quality manager for instance. A quality manager is someone who is in charge of standards and inspection and is not a manager with higher than average management skills. What is a quality piece of workmanship? Either it means something that has reached the pre-set standard or it means that it has exceeded those normal standards. Language will change, language usage will change, and professional requirements will change but the role of the professional remains to make judgements on what is relevant to each situation in their field and to have the confidence to defend the choices made. Doing what you know is best, taking in all the latest knowledge and research findings, using your own past experience, judging the conditions at the time and understanding the child or children that you are dealing with are all components of a professional decision. These diverse considerations are the concepts at work when teachers talk about quality in education.

Quality standards in the teaching profession are value judgements made by teachers. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has set standards and this body of experts tells teachers when x or y is satisfactory or excellent. It is judged according to pre-set and predetermined criteria. My disagreement with such procedures is with the language and meaning of the words and the concepts. Firstly, it is not only entirely acceptable but

also necessary to have professional standards, and to have them listed and enumerated makes for simpler evaluations in some of the processes. To believe that these are any more than guidelines, is to take away that essential element that makes it a professional judgement. Understanding standards as parameters is like following the procedures laid down in manufacturing products; teachers become no more than able technicians. I do not dispute that this is of value, but I do dispute that this encompasses the entire meaning of quality, including excellence. The QAA monitors its standards itself. Standards of excellence are tied down to what is considered acceptable by this body of experts.

These are value judgements and are not to be confused with measures. These checklists are somebody's ideas about what makes for excellence. They may be presented in a measurable form or a quantifiable format but they remain value judgements. They are judgements based on knowledge gained from research findings and inspection evidence. They have an authority in the way that experts in a professional body such as the General Teaching Council would command the respect of its members. When the Government, which in the case of education also means the employers, asserts that quality resides in standard measures of performance (or 'mops', which is standard parlance in industry), professional judgement is displaced, disregarded and disrespected, even in matters where teachers are the experts.

I have to accept that quality manager, quality control and quality assurance are part of the language with their own meanings, built upon and expanded from a former meaning, or in the case of education, restricted to a new meaning. That is how language works and remains alive. We lose some nuances, we gain some, and in losing these nuances we are impoverished or enriched in our understanding. In the case of quality I would say that the business model, and the idea of quality products and services, has enriched our productivity in business, and our understanding in managerial aspects of education, by sharpening up areas of activity which needed and benefited from such change. No doubt there is much to be learned from this enrichment, but at the same time expectations that the same language fitted the purpose in education is mistaken. The language has indeed crossed over because of its usage in official documents, but to say that does not imply

that such language encompasses or enriches the original meaning. I claim that it impoverishes the concept of quality in education.

Standards

Within a profession there are expected standards. An agreed level of education and professional qualification would normally be necessary. But the qualification is recognised only as the beginning. It is what an individual brings together from training and experience that makes the professional. There are standards, there are qualifications, and there are higher levels in all professions. Teachers not only have a collection of highly specialised knowledge and expertise, but they also have to know how to apply and use these skills. They can use them well or poorly, for the good of an individual and/or the good of a group. The practitioners may benefit from some decisions and not from others; they must make moral decisions which affect themselves as individual persons, as well as ethical decisions which will bear testimony in their profession. The doctor may prescribe one drug rather than another; the teacher will use one method rather than another. There is more than the latest research finding to be reckoned with. It is part of teachers' professional responsibility to keep abreast of new research, new evidence and new perspectives, and give credence to their experience and understanding in the individual situations as they arise. Being a professional requires acknowledging standards, but also understanding that they are the skeleton and not the body.

I claim that as teachers, because of our profession and our commitment to our work, our understanding of such concepts is worth taking note of. We are stating that we feel challenged about what is meant by quality, and we are trying to find a voice when the words and concepts that we would ordinarily use have been usurped into a new framework that we feel leaves out an important part of the meaning. In the conversations, the teachers' deepest concerns were revealed in the differences between how they wanted to conduct themselves in their teaching because they were concerned

for the children, and how they were judged about their teaching through the results obtained by the children. Not that their concerns were mainly for themselves; on the contrary there was more emphasis on how children were judged. They spoke with one voice about the constraints that prevented them from doing what they thought would be more educational for all children. Asking them to explain what they felt would constitute this high quality or excellence in schools, they told stories. It was in the stories that the teachers came to identify a core meaning of quality and excellence and by giving examples they illustrated more fully the nuances that are usually sidelined in the new definition and usage of concepts of quality and excellence.

Definitions and stories

Definitions of quality or checklists do less to convey the meaning of quality than stories. It is apparent that stories reveal a deep sense of the value of education, beyond anything that could be measured or evaluated in the prevailing practices of today. We have always had stories as a means of explanation, and stories remain alongside the advancement of science and technology. Stories allow for both interpretation and inspiration. They offer us an interpretative model of meaning and leave open to discussion what the meanings are. The stories highlight what Hogan (2003) calls “epiphanies” of learning: incidents or events that have an incalculable effect on an individual. All of the stories except one tell of beneficial epiphanies and of excellent teachers who inspire. The teacher’s response, which may be inspirational or humiliating, a timely intervention or a refusal to intervene, can have life changing and life-long effect. This one told of life-long damaging effect.

Lynn S: I can think of one who is not [excellent]! I had some really dreadful experiences that I’ve told you about, that so knocked my confidence that I find doing something just like this interview is really difficult because I can still hear that little voice telling me, “You can’t do it.” I have a real inferiority which has stayed with me ever since.

The simple requirement that you never humiliate a child would seem little to ask in a teacher, a minimum requirement. But an entire life has been affected by the lack of this

quality in one teacher. Can we count the cost of that? From my own contrary example it was one teacher who, against all the odds believed in my truthfulness and curiosity and saved me from expulsion. Both examples show the responsibility and sometimes unintended but always unpredictable outcomes of teaching.

What I am suggesting here is that there are people and events in our lives that are singularities. I mean by this that there are teachers who may elicit great praise for being inspirational for one child, but the same teacher may cause humiliation for another. The description of Wittgenstein as a teacher in Chapter 3 tells us something of what makes a great teacher at least for some of his students, but not all. Some students were inspired by this man who did philosophy on his feet. But he would fail miserably as a teacher by today's standards in an Ofsted inspection. I agree these are exceptions, but they are pointing out that in being restrained by procedures and the fear of failing to comply teachers may not feel they can express their passion and their personality in their lessons. Having inspirational examples for all teachers who may never aspire to such singular distinction forms part of the foundation of the practice of teaching. The ancient Greeks had stories of their heroes through whom their education, culture, traditions and morality were passed on. In the 21st century there is still need for inspirational models. These examples of singularities highlight what may be called inspirational teachers, geniuses, or mavericks. They all have a place because for some children they will be the very one that seizes the moment and makes the difference. These singularities can make such a difference that measurement is beside the point. If we have a standardised approach to teaching we may rule out some of the risks but we may also rule out opportunities for that brilliant singularity.

We have to accept that all children and likewise all teachers are not inspirational. Teachers rarely know if they have been instrumental in an achievement of great importance. It is not the end result that is the telling factor, although that has to be an added bonus. What counts as quality for my storytellers is nothing to do with children or teachers who are more able, extremely bright or geniuses. The stories may tell of

excellent outcomes from wise decisions, but they all arise from teaching that celebrates the different excellences that teachers and children exhibit in different ways. And most of them are simply about being aware and able to catch the right moment.

Part of this line of argument stems from the notion of entitlement coupled with the document *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003). All children are entitled to a certain level of education and the strategies are mandated on that basis. 'Entitlement' is a difficult concept which I do not intend to argue here, but which offers teachers the stick without the carrot. Entitlement is about children's rights. Some teachers may not have pushed for the most able in their attempt to make sure all children reached the prescribed level. *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003) seems to be an attempt to redress the balance by encouraging teachers to strive for excellence and make sure the children enjoy their time in school too. This is offering a 'sort of' carrot to the children not the teachers. In *Excellence and Enjoyment*, excellence is about teachers' responsibilities, and with that I can agree. However, the concepts of entitlement and excellence are muddled in this document. It is illogical on a quantified basis to expect all children or all teachers to excel and if entitlement is paramount (all children must achieve a certain level), then the most able are not as important as the rest. The rights and responsibilities issues are a much more important aspect of the debate as they point towards the morality of education. Part of the purpose of *Excellence and Enjoyment* (2003) is to make sure that teachers realise that more is expected than the entitlement. It is a move from 'this is desirable', to 'this is what you ought to be doing'. Only the individual teacher can make that move; no mandate can require it. It is my claim that quality teachers, excellent teachers are those who not only accept that teaching is a moral enterprise, but teach with moral integrity.

The stories exemplified the highest quality or excellence because the teachers had committed themselves in the most personal and professional manner (carrying with that description knowledge, skills and experience). The stories meant something important to them as teachers as well as for the children concerned. They were more than incidents

that could be verified for the full checklist of an 'excellent' lesson i.e. good planning, keeps the children's attention, has resources well prepared and so on. The stories were energised by a commitment to the relationship between the teacher and learner whether it accorded well with the list of expected preparation and execution of the lesson or not. And some stories were not about lessons.

Methodology

I refer again to the methodology chapter and point out that while scientific studies require quantification, the human sciences are different in that they rely on both quantitative and qualitative research. The marriage of the two exemplified in the social sciences reveals that human beings are quantifiable, classifiable creatures (not products), but that without the qualitative, interpretative understanding to accompany such research the picture is incomplete. It is our values, our choices at all levels that precipitate our studies into a world that is not to be understood solely in terms of statistics, mathematics or other quantifiable measures. It is our choices and our morality that are the most significant human characteristics, in terms of trying to understand what we do and why we do it. However, as I have explained in the methodology chapter it is important to remember that the purpose of citing teachers' stories is not to treat them as part of a survey,. The methodology I am using is philosophical in principle, with theory developing from the voices and stories of practising teachers. It is philosophy rubbing up against experience, thinking through and trying out and thinking through again. This theory is a result of puzzling over problems using both philosophy and practice. It is a mix of philosophical analysis, conversations, philosophical discussion (dialogues), practical application and theoretical argument. The stories are examples of some teachers' perceptions of quality teaching or quality teachers. I have no doubt that they resonate with many teachers, but I am not making the claim that they do. I am using the stories to further my philosophical position in claiming that quality as a concept in

education cannot be circumscribed by the boundaries that checklists and statistics impose.

I am not taking a dictionary definition with all its variations, nor am I using a few isolated, arbitrary examples. I would add also that there is no such thing as a definition or a notion or concept that in the final analysis is not somebody's conception. (I agree there are definitions that a body of people will agree on and there are oddball people who use their own definitions.) The Academie Francaise, which rules on meaning and usage in the French language, is comprised of people making decisions about language and its use and meanings. Somebody's perceptions, or some committee's perceptions, have been the source of whatever they decide the source or meaning of quality is to be. I accept that there are differing meanings used in different contexts with legitimacy, as there are nuances and allusions in all our verbal and literary constructions. As Shephard (1995) pointedly remarks in an education article in *The Guardian*,

We must emphasize the words that people find attractive, such as standards, discipline, and choice.

Emphasis on the attractive or popular words goes hand in hand with attractive or popular theory. The current popular 'scientific' approach to all our questions or difficulties in life is to find a way to list all the things we are concerned about, then enumerate them, deal with them one by one and check them off, one at a time. That's how you succeed: see for example *Seven Steps to a Seven-figure Fortune* (Openshaw, 2007); *The Eight Habits of Highly Successful People* (Stine, 2001) or *The Nine Steps to Financial Freedom* (Orman, 2000). The approach appears to be part of the education jargon too.

It creates confusion when teachers in schools have to become standardised in order to accommodate the minimum requirements, and at the same time recognise the individuality and creativity in children, who will then achieve higher than expected. This is not to argue that because of standards teachers should not teach to each child's best possible level, but I am saying that it causes a confusion which does not encourage

teachers to seek ways to engage with every child. I cannot think of children as products to be processed, of education being in a limited checklist, nor do I think that efficiency and success (as determined by present measurable outcomes), is how education should be evaluated. I argue in the conversation chapter that when language is used in certain constraining ways in educational policy or education literature, it becomes impossible to talk about education unless you use the fashionable jargon that prevails. Smith (1998) argues this point convincingly. Not only do I have difficulty in using the word quality, because I now have to elaborate each time to make sure we are not talking about predetermined standards, but it is likewise difficult to discuss excellence which has become quantifiable, unlike the Greek word *arete* which I understand as excellence. My colleagues and I found it difficult to encompass so much within a concept that has fallen into this changing mode without falling into the meanings that are currently attached to the word. When they searched for words to describe what that certain extra something was, the notions invoked were entirely ungeneralisable:

the buzz, the extra dimension, the feeling, the non-obvious results, the involvement, the engagement, the breadth of knowledge and ability, the passion.

Likewise stories illustrated that there are very many ways in which a teacher can be judged to be excellent, to be beyond the measure. There is no one thing that is excellence.

So here is the puzzle: teachers, including me, believe in quality that is not measurable. Yet quality itself is a measure, a measure of approbation or disgust. When we talk of quality teaching we are saying that it is above the standard or beyond the necessary. We must have something in mind to measure it against. We do. We have the standard measure. We would say 'This is excellent because it exceeds the standard measure'; 'This is high quality because it exhibits only the finest attributes above and beyond those listed.' But in this sense we are saying that excellence goes beyond measurements because those extra dimensions that take it beyond the standard are not a known list, not

a definable set, not limited to one person's or a group of like minded persons idea or even ideal. Taking account of a person's idea or a group's ideas is the only way that we can arrive at understanding the concept, in so far as we can, within the structure of language and its uses, but at the same time we need not be constricted to one technical aspect which ignores other applicable meanings and nuances. I cannot be Humpty Dumpty and say, "A word means just what I choose it to mean." (Carroll, 1872, p 66.) The meaning of quality and excellence that this thesis is concerned with is derived from stories. Such stories provided me with that missing part that I was seeking. They are not just any stories; these are stories of experienced and committed practitioners giving exemplars of excellence which they claim get to the heart of excellence in education. They arise out of the lived experience of teaching, they are immediately recognisable by other teachers and they allow for interpretation. Here is the stepping-stone I had been looking for. When teachers were hunting for words, or even after they had given a full and elaborate description, they still went on and gave an example in the form of a story.

Proposed theory

The theory of quality in education that I propose gives special place to two principles: acting with moral integrity and being aware of unpredictable outcomes. These principles I put forward in order to explain and synthesise the teachers' claims that their stories exemplify excellence. The synthesis and the derived principles are much more abstract than a report on teachers' views on excellence. This synthesis is an attempt to understand how the judgement of quality is related to fundamental views about teaching and learning.

Quality judged on immediate and measurable results such as SAT levels and examination passes does not offer helpful answers to my question: What is quality in education? The teachers' stories were concerned with far reaching results which were mostly unpredictable and certainly immeasurable. So I asked myself more specific questions related to the stories. What made each story an example? What kind of a

person is inspirational? What apart from the immediate results made teachers choose these particular stories? In what way do the stories explain excellence? It was in puzzling over these questions that I came to consider the 'input' rather than the 'outcomes'. I use the terms input and outcomes deliberately as part of the new technical language taken from a mathematical model used in computer programmes. These words are further examples of language usage taken from exact science. It is precisely because of the influence of language that I frame my thinking about theory in these terms in order to relate both the importance of how restricting such language can be. i.e. input = teaching, outcome = exam results), and to demonstrate that a deeper significance is necessary in enlarging the concepts of input and outcome when used in education. I intend to use 'input' for the quality of the teacher and the teaching, and 'outcome' to be many things ranging from information, knowledge, wisdom, experience (both teacher's and learner's) test results, career choices, life choices and so on. The point of the unpredictability principle is that we can not have access to answers about many outcomes and the ones we do have access to (exam results) are sometimes not as important as others. I am not excluding the learner's experience from this theory. On the contrary, if the input is always the teacher's responsibility, the outcomes are always a function of the pupil's good or bad experience. I am mindful that not all epiphanies are beneficial.

This marks an important shift in the focus on quality in two ways. Firstly, it is the quality (meaning the excellence and not the standard) of the teacher rather than the immediate results of the teaching that I am interested in, and secondly I am examining examples which illustrate that it is the input that is critical rather than the immediate outcomes. In the industrial model, quality is partly about the raw material and the process as in quality control, but it is also *critically* about the results, the product and whether it meets required specifications. In education, quality should be *critically* about the 'raw material' (teachers and learners) and the process because much more than the specified results (exam passes) are dependent upon the process (life affecting epiphanies). As the stories have revealed, some results are life affecting epiphanies. In

my proposed theory a primary value is placed on the teacher's thinking, reasoning, thoughtfulness, the care shown, and the very person that they are. These qualities I will argue, pinpoint why the stories are considered to be about excellence.

The development of a theory based on stories was not easy to frame at first. The ideas expressed and the qualities extolled were not unified, so a straightforward categorisation was not clear. The generalisations that I could form from these stories, such as the aims of education, the concept of care, and the concept of time, or intrinsic and extrinsic goals led me to write the dialogues about abstract generalisations that were difficult to categorise. I found categories of good practice such as sensitivity to children, excellent preparation, and personal involvement and so on. Had I set about abstracting all the qualities illustrated or as many qualities as I could describe, the result would have been another checklist or a set of characteristics that could have numbered many hundreds. (Allport (1946) found nearly 18,000 characteristics that describe personality traits.) This listing was precisely what I had felt was unsatisfactory in the instruments of inspection where a teacher or a lesson could be rated unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent. It was obvious to my teaching colleagues that the results of these classifications, helpful though they may have been in some cases, were not a satisfactory, never mind excellent way of describing the sort of excellence that they understood. I could produce lists: the stories illustrated good practices, showed teachers involved in making professional decisions, showed a sense of achievement, confirmed a sense of having done something exceptional and so on. These lists, these generalisations were not advancing my search for the vital and missing part of quality or excellence that the stories had successfully explained. It was not until I shifted my focus from outcomes that I perceived a different means of accessing the essential unity of the stories. Underlying beliefs about education could be expressed as principles. The principles were not drawn from the outcomes but from the input: the teachers' input into each story, with the input being those qualities the teachers perceived as important.

Generalisations and principles

The connection between principles and judgement is inherent in moral philosophy and there was certainly a moral element in each and every story. I argued with myself that in teaching, as in other professions, we accept a body of professional knowledge to some degree, and we make it our own through our experiences. The standardised generalisations that we accept as a professional body are the framework upon which we build our own professional judgement. The experts inform us, research informs us, but in the end we expect people who are intelligent and educated to make decisions based on the best of their knowledge and experience. We do not expect professional people to be dictated to all the time, nor do we expect professionals to abuse their positions. All of these concepts are open to discussion and wide variation because there is no way to tie them down in a straightjacket. This is not to say that there should not be standards, which there are, but that there should be space for interpretation and place for innovation and change at all times. The genius sees beyond such boundaries and is usually the one who carries our knowledge forward in quantum leaps. For teachers, acceptance of professional standards is not usually challenging, but both reflecting on practice and being uncomfortable with some of the mandates by the state has challenged my teacher colleagues to voice their concerns. This brings me to morality, which is where I turn to principles.

I understand the difference between generalisations and principles as a difference in degree of generality and in their application. Generalisations are statements that are of a general nature, noting common characteristics from the several statements under consideration, but nothing of particular note from any one. They are statements that can be generated by taking the common components from several statements and making one generic statement. Generalisations are inferred inductively and are similar to categorisations in that they can classify according to a specific order. They are also similar to principles in that they are sometimes used to mean 'fundamental', or 'of root significance'. But principles are specifically used to mean fundamental or root in more

than a general way. The principles of geometry or finance, for instance, or Archimedes' principle, are not simply generalisations. They form a theoretical base from which other ideas can be understood or interpreted. Principles are not exclusively concerned with behaviour but when there is discussion of fundamental moral beliefs or truths, then principles and not generalisations would be the appropriate word. Principles refer to something essential and fundamental from which other ideas, notions or further principles spring. Principles and not generalisations are selected in explaining regulation of behaviour according to a moral code. I am choosing to use principles to explain the essential nature of the teachers' stories in terms of beliefs and actions. This theoretical understanding of how to interpret people's behaviour and what principles underpin their actions is the basis of the theory.

Two possible principles

Two principles announced themselves from within the stories. The first principle arises from the concept of care which is abundantly illustrated in the stories. Such illustrations give me a better understanding of commitment and dedication. I name this principle 'Acting with moral integrity'. The second is also from the stories. Understanding the power of the interaction between teacher and learner and the often unknown effects of such interactions is characteristic of all the stories. I name this principle 'Awareness of the unpredictability of outcomes'.

Neither of these principles is exclusively educational. They perhaps apply to all professions but that is not my particular concern here. I stress that understanding *arete* requires understanding excellence in many different ways, as explained in Chapter 5. Acting with moral integrity is educational because it is part of the process of understanding what the ancient Greeks call *eudaemonia*: living a good life, a flourishing life, a happy life. Acting with awareness of unpredictability is educational because it means taking full responsibility for the consequences of your actions. These are

principles fundamental to other professions such as medicine, law, military strategy or stockbroker.

In my efforts to understand the specific educational nature of these principles I have turned to the stories. There in the teachers' words I have my answers. Quality or excellence in teaching is demonstrated as a practical ability in a variety of ways. For example: 'the teacher acts on the perceived needs of the child' is exemplified by Alison and her reluctant maths pupil; 'the teacher acts from understanding this particular child', such as Michelle's teacher who gave her the time to think; 'the teacher takes up a difficult concept which may be risky but is seen as an opportunity to extend understanding' is illustrated in John's story of the children who bury the dead frog. As I elaborate later in this chapter, a list of possible qualities can be derived from the stories: perceiving the child's deepest needs, responding according to individual needs, listening to a child's questions, following an unconventional path and so on. I have explained (p 242) why I do not want to make such a list. Reading the stories is more important for catching the concept of quality in its fullest and richest meaning than for making a list of possible candidates for a checklist of qualities.

In framing the first principle I follow the rationale that the connection between care, commitment and moral integrity is understood within the conversations and from within the stories. I am not claiming that all cases of care and/or commitment imply moral integrity but I think it would be difficult to maintain a position of care in the sense of caring for people and commitment to the people served that would not lead to judgement concerning acting with/out moral integrity. The connection in a pedagogical sense is in terms of responsibility: moral integrity is acting on one's best professional judgement. Sound professional judgement results from care for the children and commitment to their education. Teachers act *in loco parentis* and therefore assume the responsibility of the parent when taking care of the child. To exercise sound professional judgement is not simply to act in the child's best interest, whatever that might mean (and that concept is open to all sorts of abuse). It is to take responsibility, not only as a reasonable person

but also as a moral one. The examples speak for themselves; they explain moral integrity as part of the concept of excellence.

The process of acknowledging these two principles came from understanding the concept of care and the concept of professional responsibility which were fundamental elements in the teachers' stories. I examine both of these concepts in more detail in the next part of this chapter.

One of the themes that resonate in the conversations is the concept of care. It is accepted that it is important but difficult to assess. We can be assessed by the results on how much we have conformed to the state requirements and by how much we have succeeded (in their terms). To some degree we might be able to assess how much teachers care about their work by the way they prepare, present and follow up. But the overriding response to the minimum standards requirement was that it cared about the 'wrong' things viz. results. The 'right' things, the buzz, the passion, the excitement are not assessed. Nor could they be. Can we assess in quantifiable standards anything more about caring? Can we measure how much fizz there is in teachers' passion? The part of the conversations that gave me an insight into their thoughts on education was the part that showed me what they really cared about. It points to the response of the teachers as one of moral commitment.

One can be committed to all sorts of things but they are not necessarily moral, such as commitment to defraud or to rob. We can care about all sorts of things too. We can care about the weather, the council tax or the litter in the streets. When we care about children and are committed to their education we are already discussing moral issues. Children and their education are not inanimate 'things', as in products, nor are they items on an agenda. They require parents and teachers to be responsible and are therefore the cause of moral behaviour. We have moral integrity when we act upon our beliefs and can give reason for so doing. (I discuss later the problem of the fanatic and moral integrity.) Teachers believe that relying on certain measures to judge the quality

of education is faulty; others believe there is no other satisfactory way. We disagree but understand each others' stances even if we think the others' logic or persuasions are faulty. I connect care and commitment with moral integrity because this is what is demonstrated in the stories. For instance Jill gives time to getting to know her pupils because she believes it is the right thing to do. She cares about her relationship with them and understands its importance in the coming year for her pupils, so she invests the time even though it creates problems for her in terms of timetables, written reports and mandated assessment tests. Denise tells of the teacher who cared so much for her students that she came in early every morning particularly to help a much neglected child. This teacher had examined all the possibilities of getting help for the family, including making home visits herself. Little changed for the child as far as could be observed so the teacher bought toothbrush, hair brush and underwear which she kept at school so that each day the child could be more comfortable and confident in class.

Teaching is denoted as one of the caring professions. If we don't care but simply carry out our duties as prescribed, we become the technicians of the teaching profession but not the teachers. In a Public Broadcasting Service (October 2004) on an archaeological programme some bones were being discussed as possibly human or non human. The bones showed evidence of disease that would have incapacitated the creature, but this creature lived a long time with the disease. It was argued that since it was clearly evident that somebody had taken care of this creature, these bones were human. So to be human in this context is also to care. This archaeologist used his professional judgement and gave us an astonishing piece of scientific information.

There has to be implicit in the concept of education this concept of caring about the persons involved and care for what you are doing in relation to those persons. Although the word 'care' is not used in Nussbaum's explanation, in *Cultivating Humanity*, of the Greek word *eudaimonia* which is usually translated from the Greek as happiness, it is implied when she rightly claims that happiness misses out the core of the meaning. The morality of Aristotle reached towards a "complete and flourishing human life that lacks

no activity that would make it better or more complete” (Nussbaum, 1997, p 119). Caring is one of those inescapably human activities which is not only part of what happiness is, but also part of what education is too. Caring deeply about what goes on in schools is the basis of the first principle: teaching with moral integrity.

The principle of teaching with moral integrity arose also from the inspirational element of the stories. The stories were given by the teachers as a concrete example which they could immediately identify with, but they were illuminating a difficult and abstract concept. The story has this remarkable ability to allow interpretation, as discussed in Chapter 4, and it is also an example without definition. We could not define it, but we could tell stories:

...narration reveals the meaning without committing the error of defining it....reveals the finite in its fragile uniqueness, and sings its glory. (Arendt, cited in Cavarero 2000, p 3.)

Teachers tell stories in the usual course of daily teaching for many reasons. One reason is to explain a difficult concept. Parables are important parallels with the stories of excellence. The story in the parable is what we remember and understand. The concept of ‘a good friend’ could be debated at great length, but the parable of the Good Samaritan is one that people in all Christian cultures would recognise instantly. Without defining the characteristics of friendship we read or hear a story which ‘reveals the meaning’ for us. The stories in my theory make the principles transparent. Principles without the stories would be empty in exactly the same way that concepts are empty without content. We could write a list of principles so generalised that they could apply, or be applied to, almost anyone and any situation. Principles supported by specific examples, or stories, not only give weight in terms of evidence and reason, but actually give weight in terms of being organic, living examples and demonstrably part of the reality of teaching. This is another reason why generalisations or lists of characteristics simply will not do. Each story, valid in itself, does not fit a specific list of descriptors.

Each may fit some but not all, and as already noted the list could be rather long and often contradictory.

Principles are fundamental to understanding our behaviour; they are part of the discipline of moral philosophy and a further reason why principles are appropriate in my analysis. It is teachers who attach great importance to their work as a moral undertaking who have given stories which themselves reveal this underlying approach to the profession. Principles are broad enough to encompass all the differences while allowing for individuality and interpretation, but principles are too general to give much help in this understanding unless we either debate the meaning of the words stated or attach an example. 'Acting in the best interests of the child' is one such principle that I have noted already. Two disciplinarians both state that they act in the best interests of the child. One believes in corporal punishment the other would never use corporal punishment seeing it as physical abuse. Principles can be a good place to start but always are in need of further explanation. The analysis of the stories into two underlying principles is therefore a guide, a beginning to the understanding of what is meant by quality or excellence. They form a basis stated in terms of moral conduct which are clearly identifiable and which act together so as to make a more defined boundary. But the principles are only properly construed and constrained by the stories. The stories can in themselves be a theory, but there may be alternatives. So far it is the only way I have found to give voice to the fundamental importance of stories in arriving at an understanding of excellence in education.

There is something inspiring about the stories, something that touches us, concerns us, moves us, pleases us, even changes us; and maybe all of these things. That is why moral integrity is one of the principles that emerged as the foundation of my theory. The principle can be simple, as in Ethel's words: "You just need to love them. That's all you have to do." How many teachers and parents would say the same and mean very many different things? She does love the children in her care and she shows it. She inspires those around her to do likewise. There is no doubt that she is knowledgeable

and skilful as a teacher and as she herself explains, her love has purpose and direction. It is her story of teaching empathy in her gifted class that gives substance to her understanding of what it means when she says, "You just need to love them." Her pupils achieve extraordinarily well; Ethel would say it's because they love being in school. One possible generalisation I could claim from this outcome of hers, and the outcomes of other excellent teachers, is 'gets excellent results.' The fact that she and others get excellent results could not function as a principle. The underlying principle is her commitment to what she believes in.

The second principle that announced itself, 'awareness of unpredictable outcomes' arose from being aware of different possibilities. It is part of the lot of teachers rarely to know how they have affected the lives of their students in the future. There are stories all people could tell of teachers who helped and built up, or harmed and destroyed something in or for them. It is being aware of this responsibility that is part of one's moral integrity, but also a separate and identifiably education-based principle. Being aware of this responsibility consists in understanding unpredictable outcomes and therefore acting accordingly. It is like the Hippocratic Oath for doctors: 'First do no harm.' It means that being aware, teachers are especially careful and thoughtful about what they say and do, and it means that they are especially responsive and sensitive to the immature, the inexperienced, and the innocent. But also that teachers are aware of the brightest and the thirsty-for-more, the shy and the demanding, the aggressive and the non-conformist. It also means that they cannot indoctrinate, they cannot condition and they cannot willingly or knowingly mislead or make pretences. These are not heavy duties for excellent teachers; they explain what they do.

Their stories are telling of what has happened and are therefore about the past, but as they inevitably proceed towards the future, the outcome is always going to be unpredictable. We could not tell these stories unless they were already completed, but the telling of them indicates their importance (at that time in the past) and the possibility of teaching something new for the future. Because stories are interpretive they are not

static as lists and checks are; they are not fixed, as numbers are. They have an open dynamic which is not explicable in terms of numbers or grades or checks on a list

Principles and moral theory

This stage of considering the principles and how to understand how they could be the basis of a theory inevitably led me to question the idea of universality. I wanted to be categorical in a Kantian sense, as in categorical imperatives: "Act only on the maxim through which you can at the same time will that it be a universal law." (Kant, 1953, p 421.) But at the same time I could understand the difficulties I would face in so doing. I wanted to be a relativist too, but I am not a relativist. Dewey's *Moral Principles* were a great help in illuminating what it was that I was trying to say. Hogan's (1995) provisional universals, O'Neill's universals in context (1996) and Walzer's 'thick and thin' explanations (1994), which I discuss in the next chapter, eased my task in coming to terms with the position I wanted to take.

The theory that I put forward is based on two principles which have a definite universal intention. I claim a theory from the understanding I have of what quality means and does not mean, and I have lived it in the sense of teaching for many years and talking with colleagues over time on this very notion. It is not a theory that explains as much as we can at this time, in the way that scientific theories do, but it is an attempt to make clear that by requiring these two principles to be satisfied I can claim quality teaching. The principles point to what is excellent. They are a provisional set of universals in Hogan's (1995) sense of being so until surpassed by better candidates or by being refuted, and they allow for interpretation as an individual. Only the individual can know whether they have acted with moral integrity. (I enlarge on the notion of serious discussion with others in order to avoid self delusion in the next chapter.) How we interpret for ourselves is a matter of our own moral integrity. Quality education can be judged by how one teaches at the moment (the teacher's moral integrity in the task and

the awareness of many possible outcomes), but will also be judged in the future by the outcomes. This is quite different from being evaluated on teaching techniques and student success in public examinations.

Provisional universals

One of the problems with basing a theory on principles is how to interpret them. Are they to be construed as universal? And if not, then how are they to be understood? I would align my thinking in this respect with Hogan's expression 'provisional universals':

I wish to offer... a provisional candidate for universal acceptance; provisional in the Popperian sense that the thesis itself must fall if it can be refuted by the evidence of what is inescapably common to our human experience." (Hogan 1995, p 163.)

The idea of provisional universality is appealing. I want to put forward provisional universal principles for consideration as the basis of my theory because it is appropriate to consider the moral element in teaching that is present universally if we are discussing teaching as an educative process and not simply as an agent to another agenda. I do think that there are certain principles that I would expect to find in order to classify a piece of teaching as excellent. There must be many things that I could write as a list, and then there would be many things that I would have missed or that were controversial or only applicable in certain circumstances and not in others and so on. Principles are the underpinning of one's beliefs. They are the universals which I want to claim are "inescapably part of human experience" (Hogan, 1995, p 163). Although not independent of culture or context, they will be interpreted according to context and culture and according to a host of belief systems, and they will be found universally in education. I can see that there is applicability to circumstances, but I also want to say that the underlying principle is universal. Hogan's phrase 'provisional universality' sits very well with what I am saying. What is "inescapably common in our experience" is

that teaching is considered to be a moral activity requiring fundamental principles concerning the value of the profession, and the execution of the practices. Hogan writes at length about the universality of certain practices in teaching and calls these 'virtues' which are "educational before they are anything else." (Hogan, 1995, p 171).

For many teachers their own words explain the universal, moral view of education combined with their particular understanding of it. Education is a universal concept that has evolved with our understanding of the process of teaching and learning. The context of teaching and learning is vastly different from age to age and from culture to culture, but for as many parts of the interpretation that can be debated and disputed, the concept of education is universally concerned with teaching and learning. The intentions, perceived successes, achievement, usefulness, power control, finance and business of education (and many more additions) could certainly form the ingredients in an all embracing discussion. But there would be no disagreement that education is a concept that means something good for the individual, good for society, and something worthwhile in itself. It is also seen as a necessary element of a democratic society.

Lynn K, who in her own self description is a hard task master and is intent on getting children through tests, explains:

I think teachers are called to do this work, but some are just in it because they want to do it as a job. They are not called. Everything I ever did in my life I ended up being the teacher. I feel I am supposed to be a teacher. I feel I was called to be a teacher...When I first started teaching my first evaluation was done by my principal and she told methat is something you cannot teach. It's something you can try to help a teacher to do but there is no way to teach it. ...It's a kind of sensitivity. You have to be sensitive to the children and what they're coming in with. ...This one needs structure; this one needs cuddling and much more.

Lynn's entire life has been encompassed by the ideal that education is worthwhile for itself. On the other hand Tony, a business manager, sees teaching as a job and is clear that he believes teachers need managing just as all other workers do:

Tony: The most important thing about quality is understanding and meeting expectations. This applies to teachers as well as anybody else. If you don't understand the expectations, if nobody ever tells teachers or managers, if nobody explains what the expectations are then how do they know? What standards do they work to? They must end up working to their own. Now if you set targets and goals and set objectives and say this is what I expectI do expect all the children in my class to pass every single examination that they have.

Neither however would have any problem accommodating the idea that education carries with it "a categorical sense of care" (Hogan, 1995, p 170).

In this chapter I have shown the journey from conversations to two principles: acting with moral integrity and being aware of unpredictable outcomes. In the next chapter I look more closely at the implications of these two principles.

CHAPTER 8

THEORY PART TWO: from principles to professional judgement

This chapter continues with theory, consulting Dewey on moral principles, and discussing the role of professional judgement. The focus on stories rather than principles completes this chapter. I have argued for two principles of quality upon which I propose a theory of quality in education. The two principles that I could find in every story of quality were moral integrity and awareness of the unpredictability of outcomes. Simply stated, teachers are both morally committed to the task of teaching and take their responsibilities very seriously.

The theory that I put forward is based on two principles that have a definite universal intention. It is not a theory that explains as much as we can at this time, as scientific theories do, but it is an attempt to make clear that by requiring these two principles to be satisfied, I can claim quality or excellence in education. The principles are a provisional set of universals in Hogan's sense of being so until surpassed by candidates with a more sustainable claim to universality, and they allow for interpretation as an individual. At the same time, they are universal in the sense that they apply to everyone in teaching. How we interpret for ourselves is a matter of our own moral integrity.

Universals in context are limited in their claims but remain universal within accepted boundaries. O'Neill argues that universal principles of action "must be the *focus* of practical reasoning" (1996, p 4). She argues for universality in thought or reasoning, but also for a practical application in particular circumstances in terms of whether such a universal is 'followable', or whether it is doable.

Sometimes action on principles that can be coherently adopted by all cannot at a given moment be acted on by many, or a least not overtly ...consider the

following: after September 1939 all Poles were committed to ending the German occupation, yet for most of them no overt expression of this principle turned out to be possible for years to come. (O'Neill, 1996, p 59.)

I point out here that O'Neill not only explains this overlap between universal and particular, but also gives an example. Because she tells a story, I am able to apprehend exactly what she means. Most importantly for my thesis she explains how

Universals are not empty;....they do not dominate those who act upon them; they do not undercut the importance of judgement. (O'Neill, 1996, p 4.)

She argues that universality does not entail strict uniformity and shows that judgement is necessary in examples such as :

Good teachers should set work that is adjusted to each child's level of ability.... [Such a principle] will require varied rather than uniform implementation in a world of varying cases." (O'Neill, 1996, p 75.)

In explaining 'thick and thin' in his book by that name Walzer (1994) explains how morality is founded on our own experiences, in our own cultures and societies. These societies are 'richly' particular and different. When we talk about morality, it is from within our culture and our society. When we need to be universal and extract, so to speak, the essence of morality is the 'thin' explanation.

Morality is thick from the beginning, culturally integrated, fully resonant, and it reveals itself thinly only on special occasions, when moral language is turned to specific purposes. (Walzer, 1994, p 4.)

I think he is right when he gives his own story of the parade for 'justice' in Prague to explain how universal the understanding was, and yet how particular and individual the interpretations would be, depending on where you lived, or what injustices you were challenging. The evaluation of quality that I am proposing belongs in the 'thin' realm of moral principles and in the 'thick' realm of unique stories.

I examine closely these two overly general principles and I defend them using Dewey's *Moral Principles in Education* in close connection with the stories which give them the context and the constraint necessary to form a theory. I then argue that these principles, unlike current principles governing quality, give proper respect to the role of professional judgement, and the interaction between teacher and child.

Dewey's *Moral Principles in Education*

The concept of care, which is the title of dialogue 7, argues for personal interaction in teaching. The dialogues on aims, instrumentality, goals, size of school and even quality itself, remained in part outside the intimate role the teacher plays in the classroom with the children. Teachers believed that they could judge the best teachers by the care they took in the teacher/learner relationship. The importance of this interaction is never secondary. In the concept of care, I came face to face with this intimate interaction, and with the implications of the morality of the teaching task. Dewey's *Moral Principles in Education* (1975) gives a detailed account of how morality is embedded in everything we do as teachers, by referring directly to the practical implementation of how we teach, as well as why we teach. He defends his thesis on the grounds of morality. His book is centred on the teaching of morality to children, but by direct implication (since teachers are learners also and have been taught themselves), then what he has to say is relevant to teachers too. It is relevant to my argument here, since I claim that one of the principles underlying excellence is the principle of moral commitment to and moral integrity in teaching.

Morality of the task and the task of morality

The morality of the task and the task of morality are the distinctive ways in which Dewey states that it is a fundamental requirement that teachers engage morally with their teaching. These two distinctive features help in understanding the difference between the universal aspect of principles and the contextual aspect of principles. There is clearly a

close relationship between the two, since the approach to the morality of the task influences the approach to the task itself. There is a distinction between the 'what' and the 'how' of morality. Dewey claims that since teachers do not keep moral considerations uppermost when teaching intellectual matters, it is in the methods they choose for teaching that morality is to be accounted for (Dewey 1909/1975, p2-3). We cannot separate morality from teaching itself, although we can distinguish between the two. By teaching and learning in such a manner that morality is inherent in the way we engage in education, we do not have to try to resolve that problem. We can discuss morality, we can talk about what moral lessons may have been incidental to the lesson, we can certainly analyse individual responses, in terms of behaviour and understanding of the ideas. I agree that we can clearly distinguish between the subject matter of the lesson and the manner in which it was given. (An interesting question arises here: if lessons are now delivered, can morality be delivered too?) Although much of what is good can be observed and encouraged, and what is less than satisfactory is also observed and remarked upon, to Dewey, and I agree with him, much of what is really important cannot be observed or accounted for in this manner. What the child takes on board is important, both at the time of the lesson as it happens, and at some future time. It is the child's character, the child's morality that reveals what the child has truly learned over and above the immediate curriculum, and is of greater importance in the long term than any registry of academic success. Unless teachers take on the morality of the task, they cannot take on the task of morality. In this respect, Dewey echoes Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in ancient times, and more recently both Locke and Rousseau, in placing morality as central in importance in education. This is not to say that learning and the intellect are less important. There has to be the involvement of all aspects of education, for it to be a moral enterprise. Teaching only for intellectual development, or only for moral development, is an imbalance that could result in dogmatism of the worst kind. My argument is not for the priority of morality in teaching, but for its necessity. Suppression of knowledge, a restricted curriculum, a style of teaching that prevents discussion, would deny children a proper intellectual education. My argument here is concerned with seeking what it is that makes the commitment to teaching a moral one,

and in so doing I am emphasising, as Dewey does, that what the child takes from schooling is more to do with the teachers' morality than the curriculum. Not giving due care and moral consideration to the curriculum could not be an option for an excellent teacher. I am aware that in everyday situations many teachers may not give due care and attention to either the curriculum or to teaching methods, but I am proposing principles which identify what counts for high quality or excellent teaching.

By teaching all subjects in such a way that the interrelatedness of the social, moral and intellectual strands of our shared humanity is inherent and apparent, we understand responsibility, and we become instrumental in others gaining such understanding. Schools that achieve this interrelatedness reveal the deepest respect for children, and the deepest concern for their teaching. I would go so far as to say that insistence on the primacy of curriculum content has been counter-productive in creating quality education. What Dewey so cogently argues for, and what I support, is only possible when you have two conditions fulfilled. The first is a teacher who is morally committed to the task; that is, understands the morality of the task; and secondly, a teacher who is able to teach in such a way as to exemplify that the purpose of education is something other than discrete qualifications in diverse subjects. To believe that education is more than its parts, to perceive it as involving the whole person, for the whole of their life, and having life long effects of a deeply moral nature, is what Dewey means when he talks about teaching morality. This is what I mean by having moral integrity. None of what I argue for in this section excludes the value of highly skilled and knowledgeable teachers who agree with rigorous monitoring for both diagnostic and summative assessment. They are not mutually exclusive. Excellent teachers embrace a holistic approach, which is aimed more at life-long learning than immediate test taking. These skills and attitudes are part of professional practice, the professional judgement of each individual.

Moral integrity is a matter that can be judged only by the individual in individual instances. I know whether I did my best. My actions and their outcomes can give others, especially interested observers, a good guide to my moral integrity, but no one

else can aver that I acted with or without moral integrity. I acknowledge here that we can be deluded about our intentions, and that we can be persuaded by emotional circumstances to perceive things with a bias. I understand that we do not reflect on all we do, and not always with the depth necessary. I also believe that serious discussions with a critical friend, like the conversations in this thesis, are a significant way for each of us to examine our intentions, thereby getting a clearer picture of ourselves. Certainly our judgement is always refined by constructive criticism, and sometimes we are not aware of bias until it is pointed out to us. I am not claiming any sense of infallibility for all moral judgement. Far from it. I am claiming that in the instances that are represented in the stories, those judgement and/or actions were the sole responsibility of the teacher, and exhibited an integrity known only by the teacher. The teacher may be wrong, but the intention was in accordance with his or her own sense of what was right at that time, in this set of circumstances.

Judgement can be made by observers. From my own experience, I know there are few who could tell the difference between a good teacher and a teacher acting like a good teacher. It is all down to interpretation and that is what we have to rely on. One teacher may ascribe moral integrity to another and make a valid observation of excellence. This is the case in the stories told to me. Interpretation, as important as that is, is not what I am proposing here. An interpretation stands as a valid example of excellence such as the teacher in Denise's conversation who cared for and provided for the neglected child.. An observer may ascribe moral integrity (and conversation between the observed and observer does help here), but only the agent knows. Does it matter? Not if we are measuring outcomes. A teacher can achieve an excellent rating for a lesson that is all an act. That evaluation would be based on skills and outcomes. If, however, we are looking at the teacher's input, morality is of the utmost importance. Discussion of a serious nature between the agent and observer would be of inestimable help in each deciding if they had acted with moral integrity. Appeal to principles, would be one of the deciding factors. Principles in education are manifest at all levels, but those that enable us to differentiate between the worthwhile and the shallow are those that I am concerned with

here. Dewey in *Moral Principles in Education* (1909/1975) writes most emphatically that education is a force for motivating children to grasp many ideas that will affect their behaviour. He was writing about how children are affected by teaching, and I would add that this is applicable to teachers themselves.

This demand and this opportunity make moral purpose universal and dominant in all instruction – whatsoever the topic.” (Dewey, 1909/1975, p 49.)

Dewey uses the word ‘instruction’ here, and I noted that in the United States there was a ready interchange between the words teaching and instruction. The British do not use the words ‘teaching’ and ‘instruction’ interchangeably. Instruction is well defined, with clear goals and eventual targets, and although these are necessary parts of schooling, they do not define all that is involved in teaching, nor do they give a complete picture of education. The purpose of providing state education is arguably to discharge the state’s moral responsibility to society. In the present businesslike ethos, this idea translates easily into ‘effectively achieving the goals set by testing and evaluation,’ thereby rendering schooling and instruction synonymous. Under the present system, assessment of instruction is necessarily centred on performance and results, which can be readily observed, commented upon and tabulated for public review and statistical analysis. While it is clearly obvious that the state is responsible in these ways and takes this part of its task very seriously, as it should, the morality of the task of teaching is not only obscured, but its importance is ignored. What is important is not only how well we teach in the classroom but also a matter of what the teacher is about. When I write about instruction or training or being a teacher technician, I mean someone who does their job, people who know their stuff. They come well prepared to the classroom, they get through to the children, and they enable children to pass the test. This is their job, with a job description that, as in manufacturing industries, leaves nothing out so that you can be both confident in what you have to do, no more no less, and sure that the end result is a product of a certain specification that passes the quality tests at a statistically significant success rate. In contrast, when I write about *teaching*, I am accepting all of the above,

but I am expecting more of the teacher than an instructor or trainer. The 'job' of the teacher cannot be written up entirely in a job description.

Dewey uses an analogy when discussing the "limited and rigid way of measuring the social value" (Dewey, 1975, p 8) of curriculum subjects to help explain this point.

To pick out one of the many social relations which the child bears, and to define the work of the school by that alone, is like instituting a vast and complicated system of physical exercise which would have for its object simply the development of the lungs and the power of breathing independent of other organs and functions. (Dewey, 1909/ 1975, p 8.)

No one would deny the importance of physical education and its place in the curriculum of young children. (In Texas, however, PE was restricted to twice a week and no playtimes were allowed after 2nd grade.) If we claim to understand child development, then we need to accept the vital role that physical education plays. But Dewey is telling us that we will remain ignorant of the myriad influences and benefits of education if we see education as tightly focused in discrete, albeit necessary parts. It is this principle, of seeing the whole as greater than all the parts, that I name as a universal requirement for an excellent teacher. Seeing the entire enterprise of education as a moral responsibility is recognising the role that teachers take in the life, not just the education, of each child. Dewey's is a particularly appropriate metaphor because it shows clearly the relationship of the discrete aspects and subjects to the whole of education, in much the same way that morality is concerned with the entire person whose morality cannot be 'measured' or calculated from a list of appropriate behaviours. If one asked, "Why not?" The right response would be, "That's inappropriate. There's more to it than that." Besides, with teaching or moral behaviours, there are occasions for acceptable contradictions. In teaching, a well-planned lesson could be totally ignored for good reasons. In moral judgement, an honest person may cause hurt or injury to another. If we have a teleological view of education and of morality, then these behaviours are more than dispositions; they are meaningful because of the purpose intended, and they will stand up to argument and discussion.

It was in teachers' stories that I found that 'more' that I was looking for. Each gave a unique perspective of excellence. Stories as diverse as Sue's, who when she was in third grade found her teacher, to be the most important influence in her life because she was so strict and disciplined and accepted nothing less than her best, and Michelle's, who was just the opposite:

Sue: [A really good teacher]... needs to be organised and all that but primarily she has to be a caring person. She would be up on the latest thing but most of all she must *care* about the kids and really care about what they learn. She will do whatever it takes (without cheating) to get them to learn. The teacher who was very strict to me was my favourite teacher because I learned the most from her. She gave me high expectations for myself.

Michelle: An outstanding teacher is having constant interaction with the kids. She feels that every child can succeed and needs guidance and help and all that it takes for someone to *care* about them. Someone who is going to listen to them someone who lets them know they are doing OK. Lets them progress in their own way.... The teacher who gave me time to daydream and not be busy all the time was the best of all for me. This gave me a deep understanding of reflection even at a very early age.

We cannot legislate for individual interaction, just as we cannot legislate for excellence. This does not mean that interaction or excellence cannot be judged. Because excellence and personal interaction are exemplified in the practices of everyday teaching in the classroom I claim that they are a universal matter. Children cannot go to school and not have interaction. Excellence cannot be separate from the experience that made it possible. The former exemplifies the universal, the 'thin' as Walzer (1994) would call it, and the latter, the 'thick,' unique aspect of what counts for quality and excellence in education.

Moral integrity

Quality teaching, then, is acting on the belief that this is the right thing to be doing for the right reasons. It often means doing what you believe is the right thing, even when there is no professional obligation to do it. It means being unfailingly true to your ideals, without regard to approval or criticism or with an eye to the next evaluation or your own curriculum vitae. Quality teaching is an activity that does not require appreciation or gratitude, for it is done because it is the right thing to do; it is a valuable and worthwhile activity in itself.

John: I am passionate about trying to get a General Teaching Council centred in this country. We have managed that now. It took ten years forging a campaign against all the odds, particularly when the Tories were in power. Now the notion behind that is that what really drives a good teacher is their conscience. What they are responsible to is their professional understanding and insight into the needs of their students and pupils. That is *paramount*. At the same time, because they are taking the shilling, they must also do what the state requires.

Ethel: Children are such acute observers. What we say versus how we live. You know that expression, 'Do as I say and not as I do.' I think children have antennae for hypocrisy that is just wonderful. They have built in bullshit detectors and they know. If you can't acknowledge your mistakes and shortcomings and if you are telling them to be one way and they see you acting another way with people it takes away your validity.

Suppose one's ideals are misplaced, misinformed, ill informed or purely intuitive rather than based on sound research evidence? I am not sure how to answer for the delusional or the fanatic, though I do not think I am constructing a theory for such persons, and I hope that professional standards would prevent their entry into or their continuing status in our schools. Logically, if I say we must do what we believe to be right, then the delusional and the 'saviour' have exactly the same right to teach. This is where conversation and discussion play an important role in reflecting and rationalising. It is

through such talk that delusional persons or lunatics would reveal themselves. I am sure that such informal communication (between teacher educators and students, or governors and prospective teachers) prevents fanatics from entering the profession, but hopefully it would also recognise the eccentric but sound teacher, and guide them to an appropriate posting.

I know that we are culturally bound. What are we doing today that will be considered totally unjust in 100 years time? It was accepted that people were born into slavery or the aristocracy. It was accepted that the Aryan race was superior, at least by many and enough to make enormous impact on the thinking and behaviour of an entire era of our history. We are engaged in a war in Iraq that is considered to be either the most just or unjust war. We are not immune from believing in 'justice' that is blatantly unjust at another time. So in one breath I want to be both universal and possibly relativist. How inconsistent is that? I do not believe I am being inconsistent when I consider the moral principles, because I think these reveal that I am struggling with the difference between dogmatism and education. If we cannot have open discussion at all levels, if we cannot give reasons that are more informed than 'Because I say so', or 'God said so'; if we cannot be prepared to change as we gain experience, and keep a balanced outlook between pessimism and optimism, then I would judge teaching to be indoctrination. If on the other hand we were open, rational, ready to discuss, available to new ideas and their assessment (in the light of research or reflection, for instance) then I would call that education and not indoctrination. In one sense I am saying that although we must allow each to decide their own morality, there are some codes of morality that would be indoctrination rather than education.

If I have exhausted justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned.
(Wittgenstein, 1976, § 217).

Some students thought Wittgenstein was mad when he prowled around mumbling when he was supposed to be teaching, while others thought he was a genius at work. How do we know the difference? We don't and we can't. Two of the greatest teachers, Socrates

and Jesus, were executed by the state. We have to judge and we have to make choices. In the end we will be judged by the choices that we made. History may judge us harshly when we meant well. If we accept the present day market mentality as the external evaluation of education, we lose sight of the intrinsic value of education. A market mentality is not the same as educational morality.

We are responsible for our choices, and if we are virtuous, as Aristotle would have us be, then we have done what we think is right and it will uphold the morality of those around us too. There is no escaping making decisions that are momentous in individual lives every day in the classroom. The teachers' stories tell of failures as well as successes in terms of what effect a teacher or a piece of teaching had. The stories are uplifting and support my theory, but there could be other stories where a delusional person has inspired others to do evil things, and destroy lives, rather than enable lives to be lived to the full. The delusional and the hero also judge quality by moral integrity rather than by a set of performance indicators devised by another. But for those who wish to indoctrinate, the second principle that I am proposing, that of awareness of outcomes, will not hold. The fanatic will not accept the unpredictability. The dogmatic teacher teaches for a predetermined outcome; there are only certain acceptable behaviours and absolute adherence to a pre-specified code. These teachers would have predetermined answers to many of the most difficult questions that children ask. The teacher who follows the code which is laid down, and has specific answers and expected outcomes, is not open to accept challenges and alternatives. I am thinking of a fundamentalist in the Catholic Church's interpretation of the New Testament, a fundamentalist Muslim interpretation of the Koran, a fundamentalist reading of the requirements of the National Curriculum and so forth. Such a predetermined approach to education would inhibit understanding of the second principle of being aware of unpredictable outcomes. Being aware of, in the sense of accepting the possibility of different *valid* outcomes, entails a contradiction for fundamentalists. They not only give up part of what is truly educational, that is the opening up of ideas, but because of the required code there is also a closing down on accepting alternative outcomes. Of

course, as all indoctrinators are fully aware, there are alternatives (people do not follow the tenets of the religion, youth leave the church, teachers ignore the mandates of the NC), which is why they indoctrinate instead of educate their students. In this sense indoctrinators are indeed aware of unpredictability in the sense that they guard against it.

The principle of moral integrity could hold for virtuous and evil teachers alike, since I am claiming that only the individual knows if they have been true to their beliefs. Thus the criminal mind or the fundamentalist indoctrinator would teach according to their beliefs and defend their beliefs. Where I claim my theory excludes the latter is on the second principle. As stated above, if teaching is not open to possibilities, and if teachers themselves are not open to alternatives, they cannot act upon the possibility of unpredictable outcomes. This is true also for the teachers who limit their view of education to the targets set and who see test results as their guidelines. They too have, at least in the broadest sense, closed down on the possibilities. In the conversations teachers often stated they did not have time to follow pupils' genuine interests, even when the teacher had judged the 'off task' interest to be worthwhile.

What I intend by unpredictable outcomes is a responsibility of openness to a child's questioning and doubting and being seriously careful (full of care) in responding as a teacher knowing how important this might be. The importance lies not just in being aware but in *acting* responsibly in the face of such possibilities. I have already claimed that quality in education cannot be achieved simply by the teacher. The learner's involvement is a *sine qua non*. What is worth adding here is that the principle of awareness of unpredictability is directly linked to the notion of leading the learner (and taking the teacher) into neighbourhoods of the unfamiliar (Hogan, 2003). Being dismissive, brushing aside, by saying, 'Who are you to doubt? Who are you to question my authority?' are responses of the very opposite of an excellent teacher. There is place for discipline and for authority but there is an equal place for questioning and rebelling against authority. Excellence will exhibit itself in the wisdom to know the difference. And it is wisdom that I am calling forth in the second principle. We cannot be infallible

as teachers. We can only be too aware of our fallibility; but being openly and responsibly aware rather than refusing to acknowledge alternative outcomes is what I am claiming for the second principle.

If a teacher teaches about evolution and reveals all the evidence and arguments available, the teacher is not indoctrinating. If the scientific theory is challenged by 'creationists,' then debate should be the consequence, and not shut down responses. Similarly in R.E., the teacher should not shut down debate on scientific theory when challenged on the teaching of Genesis from the Old Testament. To allow pupils to think about both theories, or both sets of ideas, and decide for themselves how to reconcile such ideas, and to guide them into unbiased reflection – this is the task of morality, which excellent teachers will recognise. It isn't just knowing your subject as a teacher, but also understanding the impact of the teacher's attitude. This is the second principle of being aware of unpredictable outcomes. Such an approach would count as wisdom. The teacher has not indoctrinated but educated. I can explain my view and give reasons, but if I insist on one view at the expense of the other then I have been dogmatic. Biology teachers in the UK probably wouldn't feel the necessity to bring in reference to the Old Testament, as they would in America, where this was a huge incident in 1926 (The Scopes Monkey Trial) and again recently (January, 2006). However, the new nomenclature of Intelligent Design is already taking its stand in Britain as an ally of creationism in its claim that "any enemy of Darwin is their friend" (Frontline magazine January 2006).

I do not leave my pupils in doubt about the rules of mathematics, nor the rules of good English, but I need to leave open the content of their applications. I can follow the specifications of the National Curriculum, and use my skills as a teacher to make the lessons come alive, and hope that the outcomes are good for the tests and our schools evaluation. At the level that I am claiming quality, it is not about fulfilling those sorts of requirements which are clearly no more dogmatic and unreasonable than those I might choose for myself. Quality in education entails being committed to more than that; it is

about going beyond the requirements. The saint and the delusional both know that it is those who are prepared to go beyond, give their last breath for the cause, who reap the results they are hoping for. Where is the difference? I want my pupils to be taken up with story writing in such a way that they are passionate about it. I want them to learn to sing and dance with such joy that they throw themselves into it, to reel with astonishment at the sublime symmetry of mathematics. I want them to love coming to school, to be loved in school, to find friendship and happiness in being and learning among their friends. Their successes are what my teaching is all about. Where is the difference? An excellent teacher is thrilled with the non-conformist as well as the obedient, by the child who challenges and provokes, by the child who asks awkward questions. This is being aware of many divergent and different outcomes. Some future time will tell whether we did the right thing or not. We have to learn from our mentors and our experience and do the best that we can; that is acting with moral integrity. Being aware of unpredictable outcomes is taking seriously the responsibility for what we teach and how we teach. This is Dewey's task of morality and morality of the task.

Learning and teaching has to be an opening up more than a focusing in, it has to be intrinsically good for you in all the ways we can understand, and it has to be almost entirely unpredictable. It is part of that idea that we teach children how to learn rather than what to learn. Of course, concepts without content are unthinkable. Unless we have that moral commitment to our teaching, the moral integrity that demands we do what we think is right, for the right reasons, even though it is risky at times, then we are not likely to be teachers of that quality which I want to call excellent. There are teachers with truly evil intentions who also are passionate and able teachers. But a teacher who refuses to teach Jewish children because they are Jews could not be an excellent teacher. That teacher has closed down the possibilities. I do not claim to be the moral arbiter of the universe. As Walzer (2002) rightly claims, "There is no final arbiter, like the sovereign in Hobbes's *Leviathan*." But I do claim that there are universal precepts, in both the sense of Hogan's (1995) provisional and O'Neill's (1996) cosmopolitan universals concerning the care of children that I would wish to defend. Torturing children,

starving them, neglecting them, humiliating them are high on the list of incontestables but I would include not educating them as a universal concern, though the nature of education as a concept is, like torture and humiliation, open to a huge debate. In comparison, I would claim that teaching children that girls have no use for education, that black people have less intelligence than white, that we are born in a caste that determines our life, that we live only for the next world, that we need to suffer in order to be good, that we should shun strange and new ideas, that we should be limited to the vision of one holy book, that children should be meek and mild and humble, are each a fundamental denial of education. In much the same way, to teach or support by your attitude fashionable or popular cultural beliefs that are limiting and dangerous, such as that we should strive for fame and fortune, that how you look is all that matters, that violence is a necessary part of being human, that we should use our resources for our own preservation at the cost of others or that animal life has no feelings, is not education. I ask myself, what stories would I have to tell if I were born in a remote part of China, in downtown Tokyo, in rural Malawi or the outback of Australia? I submit that teachers' stories from different contexts would be different, but that the principles that I have offered as a basis of quality teaching would be understood. The principles offer provisional universals whilst the stories themselves, that give substance to the principles, are context dependent and must also be unique.

The moral integrity of the teacher, the awareness of the child's deepest needs and concerns, the appreciation of the unique nature of the teacher-child interaction with its unpredictable outcomes are universal qualities, which ensure teaching of the highest quality. There is no measurable way, no checklist, no foolproof exercise that could determine who these excellent teachers are. But talking, formally in interview for instance, and informally, which is more important, could begin the process of revealing excellent teachers. Observations and communication over time would enable a head teacher to evaluate one of the staff as excellent. The hope would be that such a teacher created opportunities for children to interact and learn and was aware of possible 'epiphanies'; that excellence did indeed happen. These are important interpretations but

are not the foundation of the principles. The principles accept that only the teacher can say if they acted with integrity and only the person who enjoys or suffers the epiphany can relate its importance. This stance leads me to claim that it is the role of professional judgement that is crucial to the concept of excellence.

If the government wants to be safe, it will lay down what is to be done, and leave nothing to chance. (A hugely debateable state of affairs in itself.) By not tolerating the non-conformist teacher, the state will lose out. It will not have problems but it will end up being mediocre. There is a risk attached to giving teachers authority, but I maintain that there is a greater risk in thwarting the teacher's right to make educational judgements. Where the real problem lies is in the balance between a necessary professional interest in what teachers are doing in the classroom (public accountability), and giving teachers the space to use their own professional judgement (private responsibility). If teachers are given that freedom, both sides have to take the consequences. For myself, learning how to compromise on issues that were not that important but not to compromise on those that were was how I managed to teach when I lived in Texas, USA. It is what I believe teachers in the UK now feel too. Palmer (2004) writes of the possibility of saying 'no' to the mandates that we do not agree with. We can and we do find ways. It is heartening to note that in my recent conversations with Liz (July 2007) as a head teacher she revealed her feeling that there is movement at last towards giving some measure of trust to teachers to interpret the National Curriculum, and some measure of value placed on teacher evaluation of progress. In her recent inspection, she was actively engaged in discussion about the evaluation of results, each child's progress and about following the strategies laid down. When she admitted that she was "not exactly" following the guidelines for English, the inspector said she was "thrilled" and encouraged Liz to continue in the "outstanding" work in the school. (Notes taken in conversation, July 2007.)

Challenging the status quo

There are safeguards in the profession to prevent the stranglehold of anything that pushes the boundaries too far. This is necessary to prevent the threat of individual lunacies, but if the stranglehold is in the hands of the state, then who is to prevent that imbalance? This is where it is important for teachers to challenge the status quo if they feel the need. And I say this, acknowledging that we are public servants. We are also morally bound to challenge if we think fit. I refer again to Plato and the moral imperative of knowledge and truth. If we know something, we are in possession of a truth, and knowing what truth implies you will behave accordingly. If the teachers did not feel restricted or bullied, but rather guided and encouraged, there would be harmony. If teachers feel that the government is displacing educational values for economic or political ones, they should challenge the restrictions. And indeed they have over the last few years. As ever, there is a backlash. The *Sunday Times* (1st July 2007) reported that the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) “has declared their ambition to scrap national tests at 7, 11, and 14,” and many teachers are protesting. The return of ‘child-centred’ education may or may not be another welcome swing of the pendulum.

Awareness of responsibility

If one accepts that teaching is a moral responsibility, it is then possible that the quality of the interaction between teacher and learner becomes the embodiment of such a concept. Thus the second principle that I have proposed, that the teacher must be aware of the unpredictability of the outcomes, is concerned with what the child internalises from education: the hidden curriculum, the unintended outcomes, and the contingency of opportunities that are unpredictable in each individual. This interaction I find difficult to frame in generalisations other than to give an endless list of all the possibilities, because each interaction is unique. We cannot include all nor exclude all possibilities. Many

characteristics would be on both lists. One such characteristic could be 'prepares lessons well with proper thought for the age of the children'. Under normal circumstances this could be a good yardstick for a competent teacher. More difficult would be 'attends to children's deepest needs'. How would you know? More controversial would be: 'uses the interests or events that happen as a proper focus of the lesson.' This could be a brilliant application of the unexpected fire drill, or a lazy teacher's way out of not having prepared adequately.

How should we teach to get unpredictable outcomes? We cannot say; it would not be unpredictable. Such teaching would be acting in awareness of many things: teaching so well and at the right level, touching a nerve for someone, taking into account how important this might be, being aware of children's deepest concerns so that you can recognise them when they are hinted at, being aware of their present so that you can anticipate their future, being ready to take flight with them if they need you. There is one simple fact about teaching; we do not know what effect it will have in the long term, nor the effect of our role as teacher, nor of our good or indifferent intentions. The complicated and complex interaction between learner and teacher is about private responses but public influence. Stories that are told of years ago, life-changing effects, are but a drop in the ocean of all the stories untold, of both good and bad influences. This reflection alone must put teachers in awe of the practice they carry out daily, with hope rather than fear in their hearts. But it is this quality (as in secondary quality) that points the way to understanding what is entailed in this second principle: to teach with the understanding of enduring worth, to seize the moment, to recognise a deeper need, to respond to an individual or a class or a school, to respond to children's traumas as they happen, to be instrumental in 'epiphanies' of learning. (Hogan, 1995.)

Dialogue 3 on short term and long term goals discusses a genuine commitment to goals that may never be achieved, but are none the less always worth hoping for. The particular, predictable and unpredictable aims may be realised within the lesson, or weeks, months or years later, or never realised at all. But the deeper significance of the

importance of these stories could never have been predicted, and were not the point in any case. Such eventualities are not determinable and not observable, and cannot be evaluated at the time. The influence is manifest at a later time: later in the lesson, or weeks or even years later. It is impossible for teachers to state exactly what has been accomplished. As Dewey writes, it is in the response itself that teachers achieve.

As long as any topic makes an immediate appeal, it is not necessary to ask what it is good for....To a hungry, healthy child, food is a good of the situation; we do not have to bring him to consciousness of the ends subserved by food in order to supply a motive to eat. The food in connection with his appetite *is* a motive. The same thing holds of mentally eager pupils with respect to many topics. Neither they nor the teacher could possibly foretell with any exactness the purposes learning is to accomplish in the future; nor as long as the eagerness continues is it advisable to try to specify particular goods which are to come of it. The proof of a good is found in the fact that a pupil responds; his response *is* use. (Dewey, 1916, p 283).

An essential part of a teacher's job is to predict outcomes. It is part of the professionalism we bring to the task, by setting our own standards, and having plans which we intend to carry out. This is not what I am considering. This is part of the curriculum, part of the content and the overt inspectable process. Some things are more valuable than others in education, and what we value will be evident both in what we choose and how we teach it. This is part of the morality of the task. The designers of the National Curriculum made such choices. These choices are enforced because this selection of knowledge, skills and understandings is believed to be what children need to develop in order to become fulfilled individuals. It is part of what the profession needs as guidelines, but should it be mandatory? This necessary minimum can easily become obstructive control. It is a delicate balancing act between individual freedom and public restraint.

Professional judgement

Stuart offers one example of professional judgement in an Information Technology (IT) lesson in which he takes up more time than is allocated. Jill with her class routine at the beginning of each year, a routine not documented in the manner prescribed, offers another. It is about taking risks because you know, for you it matters. For many colleagues, exercising professional judgement is making an assessment and doing what you think is right, even if according to the rules you haven't got the time, or that you shouldn't be doing it anyway. Having the curriculum decided for you is one thing, in many ways a tremendous relief for many, and a much more standardised way of achieving what the prevailing notion of education wishes to achieve. To have no flexibility in the manner in which you need to cover the curriculum in terms of time, because of the testing process, is to put teachers under an unnecessary restriction in the use of their professional judgements. The example of delving deeply into a certain area or topic, because you are fortunate to have an expert locally, is denied. Enriched activities are pushed into an after school activity or summer school so as not to disrupt the express train of the National Curriculum getting to its destination on time.

Without the freedom to enjoy professional judgement, teachers will achieve quality in teaching, but with great difficulty. Taking a risk or giving the moment its due without regard to immediate outcome or predetermined outcome is what constitutes this second characteristic of unpredictability. It is an intuitive response to a child's deepest, probably unspoken need; a response that captures the essence of a situation which although very well understood has as yet an unknown outcome. The present is what counts. It is what happens here and now in this situation with this child. It may make little sense to another child, or another adult observing may not grasp the significance. It is the ability both to be aware of those times and to exercise the greatest skill in dealing with them simply, openly and honestly, that takes this principle beyond the set outcomes of any curriculum. There are further characteristics which overlap with, are the same as,

and are different from those readily accepted as part of teacher evaluation, such as the preparation and execution of lessons, the motivation of pupils, the use of interesting and exciting applications, and others. The elements of excellence cannot be readily codified, since some spring from response to the immediacy of the situation, acting contingently, and most from going beyond the regular or statutory requirements of teachers or teaching.

In one of the discussions I had with Roy Corden, he argued, “We need to be aware that teachers can also act contingently with the aim of facilitating a child to meet a predetermined target ...” Redirecting a question, refocusing on the topic to get the suggested outcomes, or the desired outcomes, are all part of the battery of skills that can be observed and checked off on the ‘excellent’ rather than the ‘poor’ list. These skills are fundamental to high quality teaching. The deeper awareness is revealed clearly in John’s story where the children discover a dead frog. The teacher did not need to discuss feelings about death. Redirecting the focus would have been about the cycle of animal life that they were there to study. But she took the risk because she responded to what she perceived as their worries about death for humans, as well as animals, and what were the moral implications of finding a dead animal. Yes, acting contingently, yes, focusing in on an observation of the children’s interest, but further than that, to be aware of their fears about death and the sacredness of human life, was a risk that turned out to be a valuable one to take. This particular story has terrifyingly unpredictable outcomes. This story tells us about responding to a child’s deepest needs, contingently and within the role of a very good teacher, but with a sensitivity that we could not require, nor check off on a list through observation. The event might all have gone over the children’s heads, never to be remembered. It just happened that it was very important, and the teacher recognised it, and did something about it. I repeat here that each of the principles that I propose can only be fully understood by listening to the stories. The principles themselves are an abstraction; the proper understanding of this theory is in the stories.

Professional judgement is in that place where the personal yet public action and reaction between teacher and pupil takes place. Too much control over the curriculum and its 'delivery', too much paperwork to be completed, too much importance placed on tests and results, too much fear associated with inspections, add up to a tremendous inroad into the areas which affect the relationship between teacher and child. Teaching is genuinely acting in *loco parentis*. It is not simply deciding to do the best in the time we have, but doing the best and taking more time if needs be. It means not just that we follow the curriculum as laid down, but that we do not let the clock dictate the importance of what we need to do.

I am sure that teachers, like every other human being, cannot make totally independent judgements. They don't operate in a socio, cultural or political vacuum. The micro-world of the classroom functions within a macro-world. It might be argued that it was during the 20-year period around the 1960s and 1970s when teachers enjoyed an unprecedented degree of freedom that professional judgement became devalued because of its abuse. Then as now, judgements were based on the value system that predominated at the time, and which an individual ascribed to. The methods may now be outdated (Piagetian developmental tests and Burt's flawed work on intelligence, for instance), but this does not invalidate my claim. Today's views on 'emotional intelligence' and the phonetic teaching of reading may well be replaced in years to come. The issue is much more fundamental than one of teaching methods. It is more of an issue about the power balance between state and individual teacher. In the last few years the swing of the pendulum is beginning to reverse and move towards less state authority after an intense period of mandated policy. It may be a constant struggle to find the right balance, and it must continue to be debatable.

My understanding of the importance of having an underlying commitment to children's learning brought me back to the conversations in which my friends and I discussed their chief concerns in education, at the present time. The outpouring of words almost filled my allocated time. There were hundreds of words, angry, passionate, thoughtful and

radical which presented me with the surface picture that I wanted, that is, the picture of their current feelings about education. But they also conveyed this deep commitment to what they believed was their duty, their professional obligation, their personal desire to do what they believed was the right thing to be doing. Hence, to theorise on the basis of principles seemed a very good way to do it. Principles open up the discussion to interpretation and clarification at yet another level. The qualities I had abstracted from the stories as evidence of excellence, such as enduring worth, attention to children's deepest needs, and respect for individual differences did not feature in every story. These qualities, which could be listed and checked off, were important to support the framework, but were not necessary.

This theory not only admits the relevance of teacher's stories, but also extols them as a means of understanding and evaluating our concepts of quality. This position on stories is important, since it was through the questioning of colleagues in conversation that I found we all suffered from a deficiency of words, especially descriptors, which enabled us to explain what we intended in clear plain prose. And it is no accident that this is so. Stories are the beginning of our culture and communication, and they are able to embody all the lessons we need in life. We rely on stories to teach and entertain us, and through stories, we can express and identify our deepest concerns.

This interaction of conversations and dialogues has resulted in a theory based on principles, abstracted from relevant and appropriate stories. In effect, I am using practice to inform theory, as well as theory to understand practice. The more usual route of well-grounded theory would be to apply the principles of that theory to practice, and evaluate the fit. In this model, I am constructing the theoretical framework from the stories about practice that is recognised by teachers as excellent. The theory itself could be said to be a living theory (Jack Whitehead, 2004), since its conception and existence, depends entirely on the excellent practice of teachers. These principles can only be understood by stories.

In the end it doesn't matter if we can't measure, or put into words, or even paint a picture of quality. We all know that we recognise quality in others' stories and we have our own stories too. These are even more important in that they spring from our own personal experience and will have within them their own nuances of meaning, thus enlarging and modifying our own and others' concepts. We all have our own examples, either in our own experience or another's. If we can recognise quality the important thing is to protect it. Give teachers faith in themselves, and ensure that excellence is not lost in a world driven to measure and quantify everything we think and do. The history of man began with stories. The myths and legends that are still with us are the basis of our culture and the basis of our religions. They are what education is based upon and they are what quality education continues to value, understand, clarify, and defend.

In this chapter I have focused on the importance of the stories in understanding the principles and the practice of the concept of quality in education. In the next and final chapter I engage with stories as a means to knowledge, as educative in themselves and as valuable in educational research.

CHAPTER 9

TELLING TALES

This chapter brings together the strands of my argument for a possible theory of quality in education and excellence in teaching. I am arguing for a different approach that both recognises and depends on the professional judgement of teachers, and does not rest solely on predetermined standards and numerical results. I have developed ideas concerning the concepts of quality and excellence from a study of relevant literature and policy documents, from philosophical ideas and from conversations with colleagues. The dialogues that I wrote myself, and the stories that teachers told me, furthered my understanding of what these concepts might mean. This theory is based on principles, which can only be properly interpreted through these teachers' stories. Finally I develop further the importance of stories in understanding the concepts of quality and excellence in education, and conclude with new questions raised by this thesis.

Stories

I argue in this chapter that I have found basic principles upon which I can base a theory of quality. The principles themselves are not capable of strictly independent verification, except by the individual in private, both in the first principle, 'To act with moral integrity' and in the second, 'To be aware of unpredictable outcomes', at a future unknown time. The principles are not simple to extract or to verify, and they are not a sufficient answer to my original questions: 'What is quality?' and 'What counts for excellence?' The stories, however, *do* answer the questions. What has evolved in the course of my research, and specifically in devising a theory, is the prime importance of the stories. The principles are helpful by themselves, but they cannot fully answer the questions. It is the stories that are the telling tales. Principles become banal when stated

and categorised. What constitutes a challenge to these general principles is the genuine exception – for example, the stories that tell how on one occasion certain characteristics are upheld and in another, how opposing characteristics are upheld. We find the stories cause for interpretation and debate, and not the principles themselves. The current on-going debate on many other ethical issues testifies to this. ‘Thou shalt not kill’ is probably a universally upheld principle, yet abortion, stem cell research and euthanasia all prove the ‘genuine exceptions’ to which there is no simple answer. When the decision is a moral one, principles are but a guide. The working out of an argument for or against a principle is where the telling of stories becomes important as a means of clarifying that interpretation. Interpretation now becomes much more important than the rules or the principles themselves.

I claim that for teachers who talk and tell stories as their stock in trade the use of stories is the only way to explain and demonstrate the complexity of the concept involved. The usual way of communicating for teachers is talking and telling each other what they are thinking. For artists the only way may be to draw or paint; for musicians it may be through music. In discussing stories in Chapter 4 I found that illustration of difficult concepts is certainly one way in which teachers employ stories. Great religious teachers, and their sacred texts, such as the Bible or the Bhagavad Gita, use the medium of stories or parables, which teach us what is meant by this virtue, or the consequence of that vice. The list of Ten Commandments is given, the seven virtues and the seven deadly sins are enumerated, and they are straightforward enough, but the interpretations of these laws are what create the most interesting ‘tests’. On what constitutes ‘keep holy the Sabbath day’ the Pharisees and Jesus differ over the spirit of the law and the letter of the law. Such moral laws have given endless rationales for disagreement, discussion, feuding and war, ever since. The parable of talents is used as an example of entrepreneurship and good capitalist management. As a Conservative MP, Margaret Thatcher quoted it. It could also be seen to be upholding good socialist practices of sharing what you have with others, for the benefit of more. Interpretations fuel the arguments about concepts and ideas.

What is important is that despite this religion, or that sect, or this school of thought setting itself up as an authority on interpretation (founded on the basis of religious belief or cultural values such as 'family values'), no one can claim such an authority. In today's education world the belief that 'what works,' or 'evidence-based research,' counts as such a school of thought. Though it does not rely on religious belief for its foundation, it relies heavily on a market economy culture, supported by the scientific paradigm. In Chapter 5, I argue that the modern business culture does not inherit the classical ideal of *arete*. The present desire to align quality within a "technicist framework" (Dunne, 1993 p25), follows the same school of thought. What is important is not only the underlying denial of *arete*, but also the denial of interpretation. 'Numbers don't lie, stories are fictions' is a dangerous mindset to adopt in this question of quality or excellence in education, precisely because such concepts are heavily value laden, and require an understanding of morality. It is in their interpretations, in professional judgement in other words, that we finally perceive something of the nature of the concept in all its variations. Teacher's stories reveal, but not like the word of God reveals, the depths of these concerns (their morality), and the enormous responsibility (their professional ethics), which excellent teachers understand as the basis of giving (and not delivering), quality education. The lists, the numbers, the principles may be the hard outer protective shell of the concept, but the story contains the kernel.

It is not surprising to find that in the evaluation of gifted children, which was the subject of my thesis in the Advanced Diploma in Education (Bristol 1979), stories and their interpretation are considered an important test piece. The level or kind of giftedness can be inferred depending on the layers of interpretation that a child makes. It is considered that the ability to read the lines, between the lines or beyond the lines (Lucy Calkins, 1991), gives the lie to levels of understanding, as well as supposed levels of intelligence. Knowing the facts of the story may be sufficient to show reading ability. Understanding the meaning requires a different skill. Interpreting the story to reveal a moral or a lesson shows the ability to categorise, extrapolate or theorise. Relating the characters or events

or feelings in a story to one's own experience reveals a level of understanding that has made an imprint on the individual. For me it is the interpretive level that was most enjoyable and most challenging. For other teachers also this part of the test was the most enjoyable but also the most challenging (Lovell and Shields, 1967). It is this level that I claim is necessary for the continuing openness of the concept of quality and excellence. The teachers who told me their stories are offering their experience for open interpretation. The present system of assessment, however, is closed. It is definite, and thus defined, it precludes much interpretation. Interpretation is what is fundamental to the teacher's understanding of children in the classroom, and is the basis of professional judgement. It is at the judgemental level that professional acumen and morality are involved.

There is not enough room for professional judgement in an over prescribed curriculum with high stakes testing, and only lip service given to the idea of 'delivery' according to the teachers' skill. This is not professional judgement at the level which creates excellence, although it is professional judgement at a practical and important level. It is where many teachers have been able to find sufficient room to allow them to retain their moral integrity. But it is not enough. One of the questions raised by this thesis is a practical one: how to give voice to these stories that tell of excellence, and of teachers who remain within the state system, and manage to be excellent in ways that are not listed, and could not be listed within the present system. There needs to be recognition of the knowledge gained in the stories, and the importance of the telling in creating something, which others as well as themselves, can refer to for explanation and discussion.

Stories and truth

Two recent papers support the idea of telling tales in different ways. The paper by Melanie Walker and Elaine Unterhalter, *Knowledge, Narrative and National Reconciliation: Storied reflections on the South African Truth and Reconciliation*

Commission (2004), analyses the use of narrative in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the paper by Morwenna Griffiths and Jean Barr, *The Nature of Knowledge and Lifelong Learning* (2006) examines stories “told as perceptions of real experience” (p 4) as part of their methodology. Both point to the use of narrative as a means to knowledge; knowledge that has heretofore not been acknowledged in research because of its subjectivity. The realisation and acceptance of the perspectival influence of all knowledge has meant that personal stories of significance are treated as important in our understanding, and as knowledge which enables us as human beings to relate to each other and to know ourselves better. This has never been in doubt in the understanding of oral tradition and literature, but the role of stories in research, and specifically in educational research, has not been accepted until recent work into narrative theory.

Walker and Unterhalter argue that the stories related at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are educative in many different ways. They not only inform us of the experiences of victims and perpetrators of apartheid, but they also educate us in matters concerning how we can learn. Their paper illuminated for me the role of confessional narrative, which is therapeutic and educative for both teller and listener. Certainly both of these were relevant to the teachers in my thesis.

Truth and ‘lies’ (fictions) are perceived to be equally necessary for the telling, or rather the re-telling of the truth of apartheid (p 292-293). Walker and Unterhalter argue for the compelling truth that cannot be denied from the stories, whether in a fictional setting or not. When I write that the only way teachers could explain excellence was through their stories, that is what I intend about the compelling nature of narrative. According to Walker and Unterhalter what we arrive at is a probable truth, rather than an absolute (p 293), but I would add that I am not simply after a probable truth out there somewhere objectively, but a personal relevance which often does not sit well with the dominant ethos of the time. Below the surface of the stories are moral principles and a sense of passion that is undeniable. Facts are “already an interpretation” (Elbaz, 1998 cited in

Griffiths, 1998 p 49). The relevance depends on who you are and what you are looking for. Context, specifically the context of the teacher or the learner, lends clarity or blurring.

How much credence should we give these stories? Do we look at the weight of the evidence? Do we look at the consequences? Do we appraise the emotional effect they have on us? Do we seek out the long-term effect? All of these questions are relevant to our individual assessment of what counts for us, what aids our understanding, and what supports our difficult moral decisions. We understand, as Walker and Unterhalter writes, that "Fallible, then, is not the same as fake"(p294). How do we come to understand that stories have the ring of truth? It is because we relate to the stories, we grasp something new of someone else's experience, we converse about these differing perceptions, and in doing so refine our own conceptual boundaries and push others further than before. The truth of one's moral choices must be in the intentions rather than consequences, and this is where the second principle of unpredictability plays its role. It is sometimes with, and sometimes without thought of the consequences, that certain moral judgements are made, but always it is because of the long-term view, because of the bigger picture, or because of the complexity of the occasion that such an action might be prompted. Jill's decision to follow her own methods for the first month of school rather than those laid down, because she reasoned that both the teacher and the children needed that time to get to know each other, tells us she has the long-term view in mind. She made her decision knowing that the consequences for her would be downgrading by the inspectorate and an enormous amount of paperwork to catch up later. She did not know the consequences for the children, but still she judged it a wise decision to make. The teacher who discussed death with the children after the frog incident that John related may have wondered about the consequences of dealing with this subject, but because she felt it was right, she did it. She could have no idea of the consequences.

The power of the stories, the lessons learned and relearned, the enlargement of self-knowledge, constitutes understanding in a practical way that stories are interpretive but

not “endlessly plastic” (p 295). This underpins Walker and Unterhalter’s four aims for narrative in education, which I identify with in each part. Stories enable us to listen to and to hear what teachers mean by excellence. We get a working definition without the boundaries of definitions.

In claiming an important role for conversations and stories in my thesis, I am using interdisciplinary methods of enquiry which are discussed by David Bridges in his paper *The Disciplines and Discipline of Educational Research* (2006). The many ways in which educational research needs to use different disciplines within the discipline of educational research mean that unnecessary restrictions on traditional boundaries can be limiting. Bridges points out the value in using:

...the combination of different disciplinary traditions in ‘multi-disciplinary’ or ‘inter-disciplinary’ enquiry to investigate a particular aspect of educational policy or practice. (Bridges, 2006, p 2.)

The educational research community seems to have taken to heart Eisner’s observation in his 1993 address to the American Educational Research Association:

If there are different ways to understand the world, and if there are different forms that make such understanding possible, then it would seem to follow that any comprehensive effort to understand the processes and outcomes of schooling would profit from a pluralistic rather than a monolithic approach to research. (Eisner, 1993, p 8.)

I have discussed some of these issues in Chapter 2, but at this final stage of the thesis I want to reinforce my view of the contribution made by the stories. It has been remarkable that on all the occasions I had conversations, both the one off conversation and the many returned to time and again, stories were not simply the preferred means by which the teacher could explain their own concept of excellence or quality; stories were the only means by which they could explain the concept. Why is it that we need to tell a tale in order to communicate a concept? And what does this imply?

At the simplest level it means that definition is difficult, that teachers are given to telling stories for difficult ideas or concepts, that it is a human trait to tell stories, that it is both much easier to exemplify a description or definition by giving examples, and that stories conclude the list, close the list, or supersede the list. All these notions have been discussed in the chapter on conversations and methodology. Having reached the final chapter of my thesis I have devised a theory that is an alternative to a measured, scientific theory of quality. Having categorised my findings in principles that underwrite my ideas, I believe that there is more importance in the stories and the function of their telling than I have managed to explain

I have previously discussed the role of stories in the chapter on conversations, and I look there at their specific relationship with morality. The teachings of great religions and the teachings prior to the influence of great religions – in other words, people's oral histories, the traditions, the heroes and explanations, all rely entirely on stories. At the simplest level stories are a means of passing culture on in an entertaining way, and at the more complex level they have a role in the implementation of moral imperatives. Tessa Stickland (2001) writes "in traditional cultures of the world, stories have always been used to convey profound truths about the human condition" (p 30). Prehistory, as far as we can tell, is recorded in the oral traditions as stories. History is written as a series of stories and even now, with a much-enlarged understanding of historical tradition and the influence of the writer as author, history is not merely a list of dates and battles and kings, but a story. Geography has evolved from a list of capitals to a story of people, and at one point in my own studies, I wondered if all we know is indeed a story of one kind or another. It is easy to be swept away with this idea because on the one hand everything is a story, but once it is reduced to this, the effect of story telling is either lessened or requires differentiation. I am not arguing that all knowledge is stories in any sense of that word, but I am arguing that stories are far more important than has been considered, especially since the rise of positivism and the analytic work of the 20th century. I think that a good stock of stories forms the most solid basis of a teacher's professional training. Over and above this stock, what is also vital is the ability to tell

stories. We reveal ourselves and see others in quite different ways, when our personal stories become part of the conversation. We are engaged with a different mind set.

If I tell a story and you listen, we have both shifted from an exchange based on information to a more resonant sharing through the medium of imagination. (Stickland, 2001, p 31).

The very nature of my subject, education, is bound to be much more involved with stories than simply the retelling of incidents, or so-called anecdotal evidence, which I have already discussed in Chapter 6. The stories reveal that there is a deeper understanding of excellence, such as the *arete* of the classical tradition, which itself is a moral virtue. The whole idea of fulfilling one's destiny, fulfilling one's role in life, is what excellence in education is concerned with. Teaching is much more of a moral enterprise than a business enterprise. This is not a challenging idea to the teachers I conversed with. This is not to say that business and morality are mutually exclusive, but whereas business is primarily conducted in order to produce something identifiable and is therefore product and profit oriented, teaching is not.

The force of the link with morality is obvious in Walker and Unterhalter's paper on Truth and Reconciliation (2004). They unfold an argument showing that stories are educative and should be a serious consideration in educational research. They note that there are four ways, "that narrative points to education..." and each of these, although particular to the subject matter, are altogether entirely applicable to other educational research. They believe that narrative enables us "to learn moral truths", to learn how "to act morally through others' experiences", allows "identity work" to learn "new ways of seeing", and fourthly narrative "enlarges the scope of understanding." (Walker and Unterhalter, 2004, p 283.) This paper has a different agenda to my thesis but the strands are the same. The stories on which it focuses reveal what people suffered or perpetrated during the apartheid regime. They are educative in a sense that is similar to the stories teachers tell about quality and excellence.

Stories are unique responses

The teachers' stories are a working out in progress as well as an already worked out ideal. They tell both more and less than a list or a definition would do. Because the openness of stories permits interpretation, the individual can (as Walker and Unterhalter rightly suggest) take from them and learn from them what can be understood, and what can be learned from another's experience. The stories do not set themselves up as paradigms, or even examples from which others can copy or imitate. I have argued that they are more like exemplars, but even as exemplars they are intended to illustrate rather than be imitated. They cannot be imitated other than in the spirit of excellence, because each is unique to its time and people and circumstances, all of which are important for the hallmark of excellence to be creditable. Stories are not precise enough, and yet they give sufficient for the concept to be fully understood.

Life long learning

The final thrust of Griffiths and Barr's paper on Lifelong Learning (2006) insists, as does my thesis, that learning must be an opening up not a closing down. Griffiths and Barr write about creative projects which

...connect 'life' with formal institutions....fostering 'slow learning.' They develop collaboratively – not without conflict - over time, with no pre-determined script, but as a form of practice that is *experimental and open to new possibilities*. (My italics.) (Griffiths and Barr, 2006, p 21).

The 'praxis' that they discuss within the context of 'techne' and 'episteme', clearly indicates where the kind of balance in education must lie that my thesis has been arguing for: a balance between the accountability that education must provide as a public service and the professional element that must reside with the teachers. Griffiths and Barr's paper gives voice to the radically new idea that within the formal framework of education much is to be learned from the informal. This is not simply to help as an

explanation, but as a different, and vitally important part of the process, as my stories illustrate. The stories are about talking and writing down what we talked about. It is in talking about our experience in the community of teachers that we think about, and rethink difficult ideas and concepts. In talking, and particularly in writing as a result of this talking, we symbolise our thoughts and have a hard copy to refer to, so that we can examine and re-examine the discussion and the thoughts that we articulated. The overly prescriptive and accepted measures that are in place are not only insufficient to achieve an education, but also do not encourage such education. As I have argued earlier, quality measures can be counter productive of quality. To understand quality in education we must understand education in a much broader context than economic success. Griffiths and Barr's paper (2006) shows, as does my thesis, that by going outside the formal structures of research and education, there is much to be learned.

Balance of power

The balance between the state and the individual teacher has to be such that teachers are not only able to go beyond the regulations, but are encouraged to do so where they see fit. As I read Plato, the philosopher kings have the right to all the decision making power. As I read Dewey, power should be in the experiences offered and enjoyed. The former inhibits the kind of excellence teachers talked about in the conversations, and the latter, for whom the relationship between teacher and learner is central, provides for the possibility of such a balance but recognises that this is also risky. I enlarged on these themes in the dialogues chapter. Hogan (1995, p 227-229) argues that neither the church nor the state enjoy the power over education that they have had in the past, but that the influence of market thinking has given what he calls the "sovereignty" of education to a more "mercenary" power, that of commerce and industry. How to balance economic and societal claims with the sovereignty of truly educational aims is the problem facing classroom teachers as well as philosophers of education. I agree with Hogan's claim (p 230) that when the economic or societal aspects of education are to the fore, then the truly educational aims for individuals "are an afterthought," if they are considered at all.

When the educational aims are to the fore, as they are in my thesis, then like Hogan, I will argue that societal aims have to be attended to. Such aims are necessary for the whole development of children to be able to function in today's world and to find suitable employment. Hence a proper balance can be achieved, but only when the educational aims have priority.

Such educational aims have been identified by the General Teaching Council of England. The following is part of the statement of professional values from the GTCE (2007):

The professionalism of teachers in practice

Children and young people

Teachers place the learning and well being of young people at the centre of their professional practice.

They use their expertise to create safe, secure and stimulating learning environments that take account of individual learning needs, encourage young people to engage actively in their own learning, and build their self-esteem. They have high expectations for all young people, are committed to addressing underachievement, and work to help young people progress regardless of their background and personal circumstances.

Teachers treat young people fairly and with respect, take their knowledge, views, opinions and feelings seriously, and value diversity and individuality. They model the characteristics they are trying to inspire in young people, including enthusiasm for learning, a spirit of intellectual enquiry, honesty, tolerance, social responsibility, patience, and a genuine concern for other people.

These aims for professionals are part of the thinking that I recognized in the teachers stories of excellence. These qualities are what are necessary for high quality education, and nobody is going to argue over that. But to give the list its due would require that teachers be empowered to put these aims into practice.

Public accountability and private morality are not sitting equally on the balance scales. The push for effectiveness and for standards, though to some measure necessary in all

public institutions, has taken precedence over the ideas that education is fundamentally about something good, something virtuous, something self fulfilling for its own sake. What we argue about in education touches on every area of human interest and endeavour. Education in all its diversity, not just in schools, shapes our values and how we are prepared to reflect on them and reject some in favour of others. At different times we have accorded higher value to one area rather than another, to one profession rather than another. We have a very narrow view in our present day of who is valuable and why. This is promulgated by a system of education that prizes targets, performance, results, and an excellence based on publicly accountable measures. The technology that has changed our society in a matter of a few decades, more than the industrial revolution did over a period of a hundred years, has necessarily changed our values concerning the curriculum, the role of teachers and the function of education. But with this advance in information systems, a National Curriculum and the power of Ofsted it remains the teacher's personal involvement, shown by the teacher's stories, that is the single most important ingredient in the recipe for excellence.

We should take note of Peters (1982), who told stories of great achievements and success in business and industry, and concluded that success rested on "minimal central authority with maximum individual autonomy" (p 318). The difficulties that I and my teacher colleagues relate in the conversations are two-sided: as teachers, we accept the importance of standards, and welcome some of the structures that are imposed on us by the Government as a means of public accountability. Our feeling of doing an intrinsically worthwhile job is compromised, because our professional judgement is devalued. As I claimed in the methodology chapter, there is a genuine struggle for teachers in state education, not only in the compromises necessary but also in accepting the clash of fundamental principles.

Nussbaum claims:

If an agent ascribes intrinsic value to, and cares about, more than one activity, there is always a risk that some circumstances will arise in which incompatible courses of action are both required... a life designed to ward off this possibility may prove to be impoverished. (Nussbaum, 1986, p 7.)

There are some things that have always been prized for good reason, some things that have been proven to be good, some things that we must not lose sight of because not only would it be a step backwards but it would change the whole concept of education. What has happened with the concept of quality in education is a shift in thinking; a cultural shift. As Nussbaum (1997) so lucidly states, it isn't so much about logic as about how we think which makes for these cultural generalisation which colour our so-called reasonings and renders them unreasonable.

My research should be seen as a passionate plea not to throw out the baby with the water. What I want to conserve alongside the advances of the past decade or more is the concept of quality (and excellence must be included) in a form that is recognisable and understood by professionals, but not so sharply defined that it cannot admit exceptions. I want the ideal of *arete* to be reinvested in the technical concept of quality. It remains difficult to define quality and excellence in teaching and learning, and that points to an important aspect of the concept. At the same time much is learned from our engaging with ideas and learning from the discussion. The fruitful yield from teacher practitioners, from philosophical texts and from relevant literature promotes action that would not otherwise have been thought of. Philosophy is not only about our thinking and reflecting, not only about doubting and arguing; it is the basis upon which we act, and act with authority because we have thought things through. Research based on these ideals is valuable because it gives voice to practitioners. It is a means of accessing the truth and it is educative.

Both Nussbaum (1996) and Hogan (1995) engage in a grounded approach through their own experience in education and that of others they interact with, in ways that illuminate succinctly what it is that was good and should be retained and what was not good and should be rejected. I take from both scholars, and learn how their desire for openness and clearer vision (the claims of logic and philosophy) combine with a thorough knowledge of our philosophical heritage to produce a sound and reasoned argument that appeals to our practice of teaching and learning, as well as our philosophical thinking about education. We do not need to be enmeshed in our culture, even if we cannot avoid being captured by it (Nussbaum (1996). Part of what it is to be human is to examine all sorts of things, including ourselves and our thinking.

I am claiming that quality is not a simple concept to define. But I am not saying that it is ineffable, ephemeral or even elusive. It is not nebulous. It is palpable. If many say, as my teachers do, that "You know it when you see it", the retort "Well, if you know it you must be able to describe it in some way" would not acknowledge the complex character of this concept. Those who want to tame it and put it in a box have done so very effectively. We now have usage of the concept of quality that is clearly defined and straightforward. The quality that the engineer looks for in a component of an aircraft, for instance, is predetermined by the function and interaction that this component requires and produces. To exceed is as bad as to fail. There is good reason that this is called 'quality control': quality is indeed being controlled. The procedure is controlling exactly what is acceptable and what isn't. The standards in education are there for the minimum requirements, and the hope is that many will exceed it. There is no one who would try to argue that in achieving quality in education we are holding back some of our children. But if, in education, we apply the technical meaning of quality, we are implicitly agreeing to this limitation of the concept. It is at these interfaces that I argue that the implicit assumptions of quality in education are there, in spite of the explicit language of the documents. I am sure that the Quality Assurance Agency, for instance, would deny that it was there to set limits on achievement, but the very use of the concept 'quality' in this phraseology carries the expected setting of standards which are

predetermined and therefore limiting. I do not see a way in which we can logically defend the use of the word, which carries multiple meanings, and expect the reader/hearer to accept limitations while at the same time understanding that there are none applicable.

In this thesis, I have put forward arguments in my investigation into the meaning of quality in education. I had questions about what quality meant. Quality affects deep and important issues about education and schooling. I did not want to pursue this investigation as a “severed head” philosopher (Daly, 1984); I wanted to engage in conversations, from the standpoint of which I had in the past derived much satisfaction and deeper understanding. In my opinion Oakeshott’s “conversation of mankind” (1959) and Plato’s style of dialogue framed the essence of philosophy, so it was with these paradigms in mind that I undertook this research. I wanted to give voice to my concerns and those of my colleagues, whom I admire greatly for continuing to care deeply about educational issues when pressured into regulations which they found discouraging, and for learning to compromise in non-educational matters but never in their own passion for excellence.

This thesis has addressed the request by John Tomlinson (2005) for research into, “the individual sense of vocation and the professional conscience” [of the teaching profession]. His notes, which he allowed me to use from the opening of the Tomlinson suite in 2005 shortly before he died, give the text of his speech:

Teachers will only receive the full public respect they deserve when two conditions are satisfied:

1. They show that they can regulate conduct and competence in transparent processes against public criteria.
2. The individual sense of vocation and the professional conscience are set alongside the public apparatus of accountability (inspections, league tables and so on).

Then and only then will parents, politicians and public come to realise that the integrity and conscience of each teacher are the best guarantees of quality.

The first of these you have already achieved.

The second will take a generation. It will be achieved through patient work at statements of quality, examples of fine teaching, well-researched argument, and dignity in the face of adversity. (Tomlinson, 2005.)

This research is an appreciation, and if published would be a vindication, of the continuing and continuous outstanding work of my teaching colleagues, whose enduring beliefs in excellence for all children never get sidelined despite the tremendous effort required in a system which undervalues their passion and commitment.

In the beginning I stated my concern with government documents, where quality was expressed in terms which I did not accept. I have moved on towards understanding the more technical concept of quality and have become reconciled to its use in certain areas of school management and administration. This understanding has also driven my research to discover why this concept does not fit with truly educational concerns of teaching and learning in schools. In looking for and finding a possible solution to the problem in teachers' stories I have discovered a broader concept of quality and excellence in education. I present an argument that portrays quality, giving a richer understanding, an understanding that includes *arete* and one that is found in teachers' own voices. I formed a tentative theory, and left the debate wide open for further discussion from differing perspectives.

I am, however, left with further questions. How is it that these stories are so important? How can these stories be given a proper place in evaluation? Where does the possible theory lead me? How could the ideal of excellence, *arete*, be reinvested in the technical understanding of quality? The stories offer insights into elements of quality that are valued by professional teachers and raise the question of whether it is possible to assess such excellence, or indeed if it is necessary. If these stories clarify concepts for us, as I claim they do, how might we best proceed to use the valuable insights they give, insights that contrast strikingly with an equation of quality with indexed quantity? The areas of educational policy, teacher education including its continuing professional development,

and educational leadership are all fields in which further exploration could well be of benefit.

**We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.**

T. S. Elliot
Four Quartets
Choruses from *The Rock*, 1

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APPENDIX A

Two full transcripts of conversations: Liz Tansley and John Tomlinson
Summaries of 32 transcripts.

Transcript of Conversation with Liz Tansley October 1st 2003 Hendreds School, Oxfordshire.

P: My first question is about your deepest concerns for education. You had said in our previous conversation that you were concerned about the mechanistic nature of how things had become and that we were not seeing the big picture.

L: Well education is such a big thing and it is about learning for life, and what had happened to information and the number of times people are going to be expected to reinvent themselves how to cope with information and how to distil it overall really, so everything has become very itemised, very linear, it all appears very logical and yet there is NOT synthesis. Children are not being helped to connect ideas together which is why one of the latest things is now thinking skills. And actually doing thinking skills as a separate part as a block in the curriculum.

P: De Bono and lateral thinking programmes?

L: That has come back to help children to become better learners. The whole idea is to lift their attainment in all areas you need to teach them to be better thinkers. But instead of doing the kind of talking we have just been doing about how you discuss books, which is making your mind think and connect, or in engineering which we do a lot with the children, why does this work and why is this a good idea what led that particular person to identify that need, wasn't that a marvellous leap. Or if you are doing science doing that sort of thing. Now teachers are not doing that so therefore they have to say OK then it is always a bolt on, lets introduce thinking skills as a separate part. It's the same as having citizenship as a separate curriculum subject rather than saying, there is a thread of citizenship so, let's look at the experiences we offer children at different stages, primary, secondary, are we meeting some of the key issues through the curriculum that we are doing. So that if you wanted to do a lot of art, and the children had to do a lot of their own independent art had to work as a team and had to do some of the craft work together, Each person had to be responsible for their station, their equipment, tools and so on. Now if you knew they were getting that two or three times a term that meets some of the things, which come under citizenship. If you are producing artefacts, and you go on to discuss then and evaluate them, then you are doing your thinking skills.

I'll tell you a funny story, Frankie does this thinking skills and she had one of these little girls who doesn't have much up top but a lovely child. There is a huge range. Some children who couldn't get things down on paper some children who ended up with levels fours anyway. One of the things that she was doing in the testing was, "you need to comb your hair, but you haven't got a comb nor a brush but you are in the kitchen, what would you do about it?" This little girl who is ten was egged along by her friends, to the cutlery drawer. Now if you opened the cutlery drawer and you want to comb your hair and you are looking in the cutlery drawer what could you get out? And her first answer was a spoon. The other children were practically on the edges of their seats, and there was this great sigh of frustration.

On the other hand it was a shame that the other ones were having to have that because if there were enough room in the curriculum to have discussion like we were talking about with books, or discussing their stories, this would have been different. That's another thing speaking and listening has come back in. They have discovered of course that there is such a pace in the lessons that you are not doing much speaking and listening. All that stuff about now whatever you were doing be it science or history, "now turn to your partner and explain it to them or discuss it withy them. I mean we have lost that in the last ten years. For ten years what we used to do it in assembly very easily and very often during the lessons that they did. Now we are trying to find a space to do it. It has been lost because the pace of getting through (She clicks her fingers snappily). You see now we are getting ready for Ofsted. And for the good of the LEA Frankie has been doing another time audit. She has given a timetable that is alright for Ofsted, 70 minutes of this 20 minutes of that.

P: So it doesn't lend itself to allowing you as professional people to teach things like thinking skills, and citizenship through your teaching and your attitudes. Such things are part of the development of how you teach and how you are as a person. Such things are more about how you are rather than the curriculum that you teach.

L: But it is all about *delivering* the curriculum. And it is all about *covering* the content. Ofsted would prefer, and this was said years ago, they would prefer that it was kind of flat, the experiences the children get. If you can imagine bread and butter, then it is better to get bread and butter and no jam than it is to have half a slice of bread with gorgeous butter and superb jam on top. Better to say, "no" you have covered everything. They have actually talked about what the advisers that you and I knew years ago used to say, that we had done this and this and this very well, but that this has fallen off the edge. And our response would be, "So what?" If the quality of the other stuff was good, especially at primary level, they are only between 5 to 11. But now it gets ridiculous because they have got life-long learning.

P: Um! I like that clotted cream and homemade strawberry jam on a scone rather than a full slice of bread with a scraping of butter. For us I suppose it's the individual interest, the flair the spark that gets communication.

L: That's the way children learn to make those connections which they then do in other areas. And they go on to other institutions another phase of their life and they encounter new knowledge and skills of things they have never done before. But if they have had a good foundation earlier on, they can't help but start making the connections. The kind of psychology that we learned was that children had the experience, and you do a small bit of learning, but that when you repeat that experience enough times then you take it in, accommodate it and transfers itself to other experiences out of the original context. You have taken that knowledge on board so much that it deeply affects neural pathways.

P: Piagetian plus..... experiences at certain levels and to have different aspects of the same experience gives occasion for further understanding and even the realisation of how such a thing connects, it is worthwhile experiences at sufficient depth or over sufficient time....

L: That is what has gone. For instance you do printing perhaps in year two and you have a go at clay in year four, and then you might meet some textiles work in year five, P: but you are not doing the spiral of learning in any area.

L: You have to be able to say you have covered *everything* rather than *well*. In our school, we are bloody brilliant at Geography and our children get a huge amount out of it, but we are less good at history. And it doesn't matter, because it is the learning that is important. They will meet some good history teacher and they can take over the skills the design. Look at how many hours you are doing each subject.

P: that is affecting your teaching quality.

L: I have to be concerned with each little bit of the process. The real questions is, "What am I trying to get here conceptually?" They are able to get straight to the objectives look up the topic, the Tudors it might be for year four, and open up the plan which is often very good, but they are going down the objectives and it is about ticking them off one by one.

P: Are you saying that one of the objectives is not to have an overview of this period and how events affected each other? It is more like a list?

L: There might be things like looking at homes or looking at transport, but there are so many objectives. And because things are done in a vacuum by a committee, if we had best practice they would be spending nine hours on... On the Tudors. So the committee sat down and has said right we have nine hours and from that they would then distil, for year four we think these are reasonable objectives, which they are, and these are reasonable experiences, which they are, and here are the outcomes. Now the committee down the road were doing the same for geography and they were saying, I think we need to do some rules on this, and now we need five hours on this. So when the teacher sits down with all the planning documents for whatever they are meant to be doing that term

and she says I haven't got the hours to fit it all in. It cannot all be fitted in. So this is where we lose the cohesion.

P: So best practice is impossible across the board.

L: Yes. Except that they want it all ways now and are telling us to integrate. They are sending out exemplars of what various schools are doing. Now let's see if we can get more of a handle on this history and geography curriculum. How could we integrate some of these particular topics and how would that improve life for the children? But having done your time audit to do it all individually, as single subjects because that is what is had to be; now they are asking are you learning to integrate?

P: Is this a good move?

L: (Long Pause.) Most teachers... I was talking to Anne Muir the other day and she was just working with year four now they have gone back to single year groups, she was doing some art work, and she knew because of the pressure that she would take these year fours and she built in to her time planning an *hour* for them to mess around with the powder paints because she knew that they would have forgotten, because they are not doing it all the time. It's like having the five and six year olds again. At the top end it's terrible. It's not their fault. The printing we have here its rubbish. We developed a course because some of these young ones have never done printing. It's only done in the juniors and it's pathetic. Because they have only done it once. We have already done printing. So to answer your question "Is it a good move to integrate?" It is *only* if you are left alone enough to integrate it properly and not according to an itemised list. There was a core entitlement; you have to do history you have to do geography, All that sort of stuff, here are some planning documents such as we already have, which contain very good stuff, "How ere you going to make the curriculum fit what you think your children best need?" (183)

.....curriculum 2000 the has told us that, and the has also told us that for each year group, the cohort that they like to talk about, to get your results up, you can tailor the curriculum according to that year group. So if you have a year group that is weak, it is OK therefore to do less art. Less history because that year group needs to do more English and maths. Whereas if you have got high flyers, they will be expecting to see the breadth. So you are in a catch 22. They have given you the freedom to adapt the curriculum as you think best for your individual year groups. Now they are talking about wanting diversity and wanting schools to build on their strengths. But too many messages, because it is all so centralised, you don't know that the Ofsted person coming into you could say to you, "I haven't picked that up yet."

Have you read the Primary Strategy that has just come out? You need to get hold of it. A government publication. *Excellence and Enjoyment; a strategy for primary schools* DfES. They have had National conferences and I went to one with government spokespeople there. It was very good. What they are trying to say is that schools don't realise or won't take on board the actual amount of freedom they do have already. Which is true when you read these documents you can more or less do as you want. My

notes read: Get the collaborative working policy out again. I used to have one like you would on why it is important for children to work in groups. (208) Better to call it collaboration rather than group work. And all that stuff we used to do about eye contact, listening, feeding back. Have you had a go at being the leader? Do they know how to support and all have you talked about what it is like to support? All that that is taught as life skills, all that is coming back. But I know I am not going to get this done. How do I map this into the curriculum planning? Role-play is part of the lesson. All this is coming back.

“Our curriculum is over full already.” (Quoting from the document.) Importance of speaking and listening, learning and teaching are the most important characteristics of a school. It all overlaps. “The importance of developing children’s learning styles.” “You need a culture to inspire confidence in children as learners i.e. how they see themselves.” This is all coming back and we will have to prove that we are doing it. David Hopkins.

P: Good to hear of speaking and listening because I got the impression that lecture style was preferred.

L: Yes it was lecture and class groups.

P: I look at Stockham who were ordered to revert to year groups, close the doors, teacher up front.

L: Yes! Yes teacher up front and exposition and then off to do your group work and differentiation. Here’s another in summing up: “It’s not doing more but doing things differently.” and there is a shift towards partnership, informed professionalism and not a return to the good old days. They keep telling us that. It is to be disciplined. Continuing professional development. And the importance of underperformance not just low attainment but *underperformance*. Now they are getting at schools and saying, “you’re coasting. You are under performing. You are not under-attaining and OK you are hitting the targets, but you are actually underperforming.”

P: professional judgement? If you are told what to do and how much time you need to spend on it where is the room for professional judgement about individual children?

L: That is one thing that we think is very important and Frankie and I try to do this all the time. I am a small school and yet I am under pressure to have separate co-ordinators and this is another big thing they want to have national standards, for co-ordinators for their subject knowledge in their subject area, And their role is to monitor and support and develop and to do an audit and in effect to be a mini manager of that subject. They want to have national standards. And I have not been able to do that obviously Frankie has been able to do amazing things in English. Mags has been brilliant with the maths and we need to get bits of paper together for that if we can, but the others...take on music take on geography very, very small, very, very simple, performance...Targets...very practical just a couple of things and all the other stuff has been the hours we spend supporting them talking with them helping them with assessments and with displays has been about making them a better teacher. Which is

all to do with special needs and provision for that as well it's about being a better teacher. So the more skills you have as a teacher it doesn't matter whether its geography or whatever it's about being a better teacher. It is about this professional judgement. That is what has gone away in this subject specialisation and that is what we need to bring back.

P: Professional judgement is undermined.

L: the emphasis of the past 10 to 15 years has been the de-skilling of the teachers. And now they have to match this new strategy to the new Ofsted inspection regime. There is mention here of Sweden. This will be of interest to you. They mention their egalitarianism and they have better results than us because egalitarianism is part of their culture. Therefore this is why they want the joined up thinking between health and education, they are beating us in the reading stakes, and another but where schools can't do it all in terms of deprivation in class. They have discovered that schools cannot do all that, which is why they want the joined up thinking with health and social services. Key stage 2 is the only stage in education between the ages of 3-18 where class gaps narrow the attainment. If you look at all pupils between the ages of 3 and 18 this is from their data, the only key stage, that is foundation, Key stage 1,2,3,4, to take you up to 18, the only stage, the only Key stage they have now discovered where the gap is narrowed in attainment, in respect of social class is Key Stage 2. That is 7-11. In other words social class is *not* determining the outcome at KS2 as much as it does at KS1 which of course it does when they come into school, as it is at the other end when they are going on to University. Now that is really interesting isn't it?

P: Where are the important years? If you don't get it at home then primary stage is the most important schooling that we get. Not the parenting not the family but the school is the primary force of educational attainment at this stage.

L: KS1 in 2004 and 2005 they are going to make changes in the way that they test. They are going to make it more a teacher assessment because teachers keep bleating about wanting it, so this is their answer and this is a classic for the kind of the frame, the mindset. So they take on board that the teachers at KS 1 in particular that teacher assessment should be more important, than the test and that the tests are not showing us anything we didn't know in the first place, therefore why have them? has come back and said, "Alright then, but the LEA will be *rigorous* and schools will *have to defend* (this is the language I took down), schools will have to defend their evidence, because of value added." It's not, "Oh so we take that on board so its not telling you anything new and you can already judge what you are doing and what they can do and this will save us millions and perhaps it would be better for the kids. But no, we get OK, and then you will have to defend your position the LEAs will have to be rigorous. It is threatening, macho, bully tactics. They want lots more design and technology going on. They want to make sure there is more sports, more music and lots more RE. We can set our own targets but they must be *ambitious*. Then this I have a few things marked, you must get this, "We want schools to feel free to take control and to use that freedom to take a fresh

look at their curriculum, their timetable, and their organisation of the school day and week, and think actively how they would like to develop and enrich the experiences they offer the children. Take account of the individual needs of all children in the school, the local context, the particular skills and enthusiasm of the staff, the distinctive ethos of the school, resources and so on blah-di- blah.

P: Do you see this as something new?

L: Well yes! Because we will then turn around for instance if you think that we were failed on geography on the last inspection, in fact it was all right the man said what we did was good we just don't do enough. If we then set a statement in our curriculum that said we have chosen not to do terribly much about geography, for very good reasons but we want our strength to be music or art or something else, I am not sure now whether that would stand with Ofsted or not. This is the problem. It is speaking out of both sides of your mouth. Quote "It enables schools to lead their own improvement to ensure that schools are properly accountable." "Schools can already decide which aspects of a subject that pupils will study in depth. The requirement is that schools cover the programme of study but it is for individual teachers to decide which aspects they wish to emphasise. E.g. they may wish to cover some aspects in a single afternoon and turn others lasting a whole term." They can just choose how long to spend on each subject. "It is for schools to decide how they are going to organise their time table. QCA guidance suggesting how much time to allocate to each subject is not statutory." How to raise the learning in a school day. No requirement to teach the subjects discretely they can be grouped or be taught through projects. If strong enough links are created between subjects, pupil's knowledge and skills can be used across the whole curriculum."

P: We knew that before we were instructed to do it discretely.

L: The trouble is when you have diversity when you go to inspect something that puts a very different onus on the inspectors. They have to have some idea of quality and go to different institutions, see different amounts of subjects in terms of time and quality being delivered, if you want to use that word, but still somehow know whether there is a quality education. It is much easier to go along and say look, you know you should be spending 28% of your time on. You must do one hour a week on RE. Prove it. Now why should I do one hour a week of RE? If you were to talk to the children and looked at some of the work, and heard what the teacher might say about the age range, And you thought they had done very good stuff in RE, depending on the skill of the teacher, they might have been able to do that roughly spending 20 minutes a week, but it might have taken another teacher an hour a week to get to something very mediocre. But the person who is coming to look at you, has got to have the skills to get round that.

P: Two sided talk. Because I remember what we did in depth was always a result of what took off with the children in that particular topic. IOW trip we planned geology and seawater life but what we got was poetry that we never expected. So that was what we did in depth.

L: Now that wouldn't count at the minute because they would come to you and say, "Um poetry. How interesting. Where else do you fit that in your curriculum? And the in thing at the minute is to be able to open up a file for every year group Years 12345 and 6 all the way through and say here's the curriculum map there's poetry for year 6. Now you tell me that you went away for a week and you did a lot of poetry UMM so now what is missing? Let's audit what it was that got missed. It says here you were going to plan to do a lot of geology are you now telling me that 20% instead of the 80% as planned? Come on you will have to make that 60% up somewhere else.

P: So the new language is what we want to hear. But how can you reconcile it with the requirements and the assessments made by outsiders? It's easier when you have the checkboxes and the timetable.

L: it's just as you had in Texas. The inspectors want your long term plans for instance the Tudors. They look at your medium term plans where you have said you will give four sessions over four weeks, they expect to be able go to the exercise books and see the work with the dates which should match up. The fact that you might have had a couple of wonderful afternoons, doing a lot of drama or being on the Internet and actually thinking to yourself, that quite seriously when I look at the objectives, I have covered those, so that is done and dusted that's enough. I didn't do a lot of written work so I'll remember that the next history topic I'll remember we had a wonderful time with the drama and better make sure they have done some writing it up report to whatever. That is teacher judgement.

P: Exactly as we did it.

L: But the teacher gets completely bogged down because it all has to be written down and it has to have been thought about and planned and if it hasn't been then you are up the creek, you really are.

P: Thanks for all that I will get the document and be talking to you again I am sure.

L: By the way, after our last conversation, I looked up product in the dictionary. To produce is to bring forth and another lovely meaning of the word was to yield. So the thing about being quite happy with an industrial model, we are producing and we are looking at products. It is very creative isn't it having... yield is a lovely the idea of having quantity and weight and measuring something and of growth that it has come to fruition. And the idea of moving forward.

P: the new language that excluded me may have benefits on the administrative side.

L: I do like the model and the language. We have always had a mission in education. We would have talked about the philosophy, but if you say that most organisations have a mission the good thing about that is that ambition is about propulsions.... The tape ran out. We had talked for an hour.

**Transcript of Conversation with Professor John Tomlinson Feb 14th 2003
Warwick**

Pam: Could you tell me about your deepest concerns in education at this present time?

John: The 'at this present time' bit we'll come to that secondly.

The only thing I have ever cared about and why I always thought education was something I ought to be working in is the notion of how people could liberate their own best selves and in doing this, so understand themselves that they also come to understand other people and therefore respect them. So you get both individuality and solidarity simultaneously.

The problem with most political philosophies is that in the practical world they concentrate either on the individualism as Thatcherism did, or on collectivism as communism in its worst form did, and treat the world as though people were divided in a dualistic way and that only one side of our nature can be attended to at once. I have never felt that was right, and the more I hear about what anthropologists and biologists are finding about the way in which our species developed then co-operation has been much more important than competition. That makes the point there.

So I am interested in helping people grow and have a deep sense of understanding of themselves and the world, and in doing that, feeling more and more understanding and compassion for others.

P: A very solid stand for education as I see it too.

I am interested in the dualism you mention. I am finding that there is a dualism with teachers in schools, trying to deal with their personal idealism, which is thwarted by a mandated state system.

J: Yes, good I agree with you Pam. That's where we come to the second bit of your question and my concerns for the present time. Viv may have told you that one of the things I am passionate about is trying to get a General Teaching Council centred in this country. We have managed that now. It took ten years forging a campaign against all the odds particularly when the Tories were in power. Now the notion behind that is that what really drives a good teacher is their conscience. What they are responsible to is their professional understanding and insight into the needs of their students and pupils. That is *paramount*. At the same time, because they are taking the shilling, they must also do what the state requires.

The parable I use about this is “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto to God the things that are God’s.” God is there in the secular world as your own professional training and insight which you uniquely have as a teacher. That’s what makes teachers different from doctors and nurses and social workers and the rest of us; they understand about people’s learning and their training is devoted to that. And there is no gainsaying in that, so the whole notion of professionalism, which has been so derided in the twentieth century, (and of course post-modernism claims it as another problem since all altruism is another form of selfishness,) you have to confront that face on if you want to become a professional in my sense of the word. And slowly there is fight-back going on and so many teachers, as you say, actually feel it irksome to be mandated in this way, even though more than half have never known the professional freedom that I grew up with and I suppose you did too.

P: I find it rather difficult in seminars on research methods when the lecturer says that students in adult education need to be involved in their own planning and evaluation. I interrupted and said, “and so they should at primary level.” We did it in the 70s and 80s. My colleagues can’t do it now because the topics are all laid down for them. I got the usual responses of, “it was not done properly in the 70s.” It seems it was all black in the past and now it is all going to be white in the future. It makes me wonder if we are indoctrinating our young teachers now. The language I hear in education is taken from the managerial model. They talk about *delivering* a curriculum, children as *products*, education as *product*, that *target setting* is more important than the environment. The *customer needs to be satisfied*.

J: That has been the jargon of the last 15 years or so. I do think that there are some people around in the DfES and in the inspectorate and in teacher training now who are trying to reconstitute the mind set that you and I would approve of. How do you do that within the strong framework of public accountability, which I think you’ve got to have? You have got to be accountable. But it is a question of how to do that whilst still leaving room for professional judgement. And so you come back to this issue of judgement. *Judgement is the essence of professionalism. Quality lies in the relationship between the appropriate and the best you can for the person under those circumstances. And be known to explain why you have done it rather than just making a mystery of it.* That’s where I stand on quality. Quality has become an adjective instead of a noun as in quality time and so on, and that has caused intellectual confusion.

P: I too wonder if it says Quality Assurance, whether that means that the Assurance will be excellent?

J: It is now as if quality, as a word in itself, means good. So why then do we say is it good quality or poor quality? That is an interesting question. As you know in philosophy, we talk about primary and secondary qualities.

P: Do you mean like Locke?

J: Yes Locke, the notion that some things are intrinsic and some things are what you experience as a result of primary qualities and are secondary qualities. It's not a bad dualism. Berkeley said it was all in the mind, and there is something in that, in that it is common sense. But I still think that we mislead ourselves and our teachers when *we assume that quality is somehow just a thing that you either have or you don't, and the notion of appropriate or high quality*, which must be predicated on all this other substructure of what is a definition of how people learn and how do we know whether they are learning and how do they know that they know they are.

P: This leads me very nicely into my next question which is how do we know when we have this high quality, this excellence? I would like a story preferably, or for you tell me about a person or incident that exemplifies to you this high quality in teaching that we find difficult to describe but that we both know exists. The excellent teacher, that piece of teaching or learning that you know succeeded. The excellent school?

J: Yes. (Pause) That's very difficult. (Pause) I'm not sure that I could think of something immediately. (Pause) But there is a story that I am allowed to tell and it comes from when I was CEO. One of the things that I did when I was in Cheshire was to set up a series of residential study centres; local environmental centres in redundant primary schools, for primary children. Now when I did that thirty-five years ago it was regarded as outrageous to take the children away when for many of them it was the first time they had been away from home. Anyway it worked very well and the practice became established. We eventually had eight centres.

There was this story about a little girl; she was about ten, I think. She went to such a centre and she had a marvellous experience and she was changed by it. Part of it was that while they were working there, she and her friend found a dead frog when they were out in the fields near the centre. And the teacher noticed what they had done. What they did was to talk about it and decide what they should do. They decided to give it a decent burial and the teacher being a good teacher, which is much to your point, didn't interfere, but watched and listened. When they were all in a circle round the pond where they were sharing what they had been doing that day, the teacher asked the girls to explain what had happened to them and why they had done this. Now that led to a marvellous conversation about the nature of life and death, life after death and how one should respect the dead properly, and how we get upset at death and all that. Now this was so striking to the parents when the girl got home and told her sister all about it that they actually went to the centre and had a look round. The warden was there and he showed them around. The warden said, "This is the bed your sister had and one day you might come here."

Now it was that little girl who had had the experience with the frog, at the centre who 2 weeks after was found dead on the beach at Llandudno.

Murdered. It was something of a cause célèbre at the time. Four years ago now? I was privileged to see the letters which the family wrote to the centre and to the school, saying how much in these desperate times, this experience that the girl had had, and the way she explained it to her younger sister and to them had helped them in this time of

losing their daughter. Coming to terms with death. A spiritual experience from a physical loss. The school was wonderful, and not just that, they were a proper help to the family in the way that they could accept. I don't know whether that makes your point Pam, but it seems to me that what I say then to teachers when I tell them all this, is that this story illustrates there are parts of our lives which are really the most important part of lives to us but which for the most part we don't talk about and can't talk about very often. But some instance throws a blinding light on the notion of life, and death, and life after death, human relationships and what we do about them. And that leads you then to ask yourself how in a school you can create such a web of truthful relationships and understandings that people are strengthened and have spiritual life as well as a physical and mental life and that takes you on to how to build that ethos in a school where values rule, where relationships are paramount and how they deal with questions of truth.

P: It can exist in one teacher in isolation but when the whole school is able to offer this level of understanding...

J: Oh it is so much stronger. That is the strongest. One teacher can make a difference, a single teacher like Goodbye Mr. Chips, who had such a mental and spiritual view of humanity that he effectively turned the brutal, conventional school into a school that something that was quite different.

What I try to teach, to persuade teachers of, is that it is possible for each of us in a small way to be part of an ethos like that. So I think that notion of a brilliant teaching, a teacher who holds back at the moment whilst the children were dealing with the frog and internalising what they felt and sharing it but then later open to share it with other people that is an example of lovely teaching.

P: Acute sensitivity. Sensitivity to children developing and learning.

J: It is. It is.

P: One other area I'd like to talk about is the size of school. As you know, my passion was to be a head of a small school. Particularly a small rural school where I had free rein to run things my way. It wasn't just that I wanted to be my own boss but because I really believe that for young children it is the by far the best way to enter into public life. I learned of enormous disadvantages when I did become head. But I would like to know your thoughts on this. Particularly if you think that size assists or detracts in creating the kind of ethos which we feel is important for the high quality that we want for our children.

J: In one sense scale does matter. But it isn't simple. The question you should ask, I mean in the sense of ask yourself, is how you can be large and small at the same time. Now that is what I did in Cheshire where I had 25 thousand staff and a million population and about 800 schools.

What people said was that after I had been there 18 years or so, was that it didn't matter if you went to a youth club or a primary school, secondary school or an FE college, you

would have something of a sense of the same sort of values pervading the place; this was what we were about. Now it didn't work for everyone and of course there were disasters. But if you can create a common ethos and give managers room, they will create human-scale organisations within large ones.

If you take that down to the schools, if it is a large school, then the only thing to do is to subdivide it so that there is human contact. So that the child knows at least one teacher knows him well *but* that there is a scale of values that is stronger. I think that is the secret: having a humane and human scale. It is certainly easier to do in small schools. I have a daughter who is head of a school of about 35 children from 4-11. She has created a marvellous singularity of values there. She knows that the danger in this is that it depends too much on her. The great thing is, as the Chinese proverb says, as the leader walks the people will say; we did it ourselves. That's the secret of leadership of complicated arrangements, giving them a power over their own lives stage by stage. People respect leadership which leaves them to feel more able to do it themselves. And really to know that. But actually doing that when you are faced with teachers who are really a bit inadequate, stupid or lazy it is very difficult. There is no doubt about that. But you have got to keep working with the material you've got. Think of it in terms of what is prudent and even of redemption. If you give up on that idea you really shouldn't be in education.

P: It's working the two together that is very difficult. To reconcile and make comfortable bedfellows out of intransigent adversaries as I put in my transfer document this week. There is not enough room for personal professional judgement. The test taking and scores were what counted over and above ALL else in Texas. Test results carried the supreme role. I went over to the states in 1990 and over the intervening ten years or so I have seen the same thing occurring in the British schools which I have kept in touch with.

J: Indeed Absolutely!

P: I could see where in Texas they were vying for position and funding all on test results and numbers I see it here now and worry that we are going in the same direction as Texas.

J: Yes! That is exactly what is happening here. I am afraid there has been very little change until recently but I think I am beginning to see it now the situation is getting better. We know that it is not about targets and quick results as the previous insisted. I remember sitting in a small town, in Minnesota and the Superintendent there was looking at primary school test results and so on, statistical displays, and he said, "Somewhere in here is the answer, and I just can't crack it!"

P: It is such a different perspective. The superintendent I conversed with said it was all about funding. As often as I tried to steer the conversation about what was fundamental to education she always said. "You can't do it if you haven't got the money." Do you feel we are heading along the same materialistic path?

J: I think we have been there. And sometimes things were desperate, materialistic. But there are very good signs of wanting to re-empower schools and if they do that and loosen the shackles of the targets and start bringing in less regimented inspections which I think they are trying to do through a system of self-assessment in schools.

Meanwhile there's a lot going on in Further education where I am also very active.

There they may surprise us because in theory they have a volunteer audience, at least it is presumed so, but it isn't a volunteer audience if you are in a work place or a learning centre stuck out in the middle of nowhere or some crummy employer's outfit where they have got to get them to do things. So the idea there is that basing it on the insight that making an environment suitable for learning is the key. We call it 'Inclusive Learning' That's what I created the General Teaching Council for. That's what it is there for. We have created a code of conduct. A code of principles based on some work that Viv and I had done together and published. We are at the stage now of developing those still further. I was in a small working group and they asked, "Well who is the audience for this?"

I said the audience is us. It is the profession speaking for and to itself. About its highest aspirations, its concerns, how it knows that what it is doing is worth doing, how it assess itself and judges the work we do with children and how we know how it's getting its work done. The eavesdropping audience is the parents and employers and the policy makers who need to know how high quality can be created from professional dedication and training.

P: That's wonderful! And it's the first time I have heard of policy makers being called eavesdroppers. I like that idea. We are too aware that since we work in the public sector we have to do as we are instructed, but we need to be dictating about our profession and the policy makers should be listening.

J: Absolutely. Spot on!

John also allowed me to use the following notes.

Notes on the opening of the Tomlinson Suite GTCE Birmingham February 2005

These things I hold to be true. Teachers will only receive the full public respect they deserve when two conditions are satisfied:

1. They show that they can regulate conduct and competence in transparent processes against public criteria.
2. The individual sense of vocation and the professional conscience are set alongside the public apparatus of accountability (inspections, league tables and so on).

Then and only then will parents, politicians and public come to realise that the integrity and conscience of each teacher are the best guarantees of quality.

The first of these you have already achieved.

The second will take a generation. It will be achieved through patient work at statements of quality, examples of fine teaching, well-researched argument, and dignity in the face of adversity.

It will require the quiet labour of a generation of dedicated teacher trainers, teachers and their leaders in the Council and on the staff. Yours will be a painstaking but joyous mission, and the torch will be handed on several times before it reaches Mount Olympus.

My joy is that you have come so far so quickly.

My pride - a very humble pride - is that you have acknowledged the part I was so happy and privileged to have played in bringing about a General Teaching Council after one hundred and fifty years of false trails and false dawns.

Today, above all days, I offer you my respect and my love.

Summaries of 17 Conversations UK 2003 - 2007

Alison Boyd

Alison and I taught together at a primary school in Oxfordshire. She qualified in her native Scotland and was a real asset to the school with her skills in maths and computer science. We became friends when her husband, an astronomer gave my astronomy club insights into telescopes and viewing constellations. She is now deputy head at another school.

Concerns: Teaching is demanding with its target setting and its goals, achieving certain levels and doing the SATs (Standard Achievement tests). We are now teaching things at primary level that we used to do at secondary (in geometry for instance). The children don't have sufficient time to learn their tables and practice them and they are rushed into further maths. Having insisted on separate literacy and numeracy times we are now being told to find links and integrate! The curriculum is more content driven than skills driven so in things like art children are not getting time for the skills. Timetabling is strict so that each area gets its slot, but it is very inflexible and there is tremendous pressure. "Ofsted (Office of Standards in Education) is always looming over us". I found inspections so unpleasant and it confirmed that I was not very good though they didn't say anything bad. Parents are getting concerned in ways that are new; they don't understand the jargon and worry about what it all means. All that counts for a school is the number of level 4s so all the progress made with all the other children seems to count for very little. Baseline assessment when the child first enters school is so difficult. There were 90 different tests when that started.

Quality: For her own two boys she wanted them to be socially able and have a love of learning. Most parents want their children to be happy at school, not worried and anxious and miserable. Quality teachers would acknowledge progress especially with the special needs children who will never get to the same levels (and therefore in some ways are always failures under the present system). You can sense excellence in a school. You can see how the teachers and children interact. Getting an excellent grade in the inspection process means you have done one good lesson and the planning was well done. She did not pretend to understand what *they* meant by excellence. She wasn't one of them; she didn't get that grade. "It's not in my nature to use the word excellent so I find it all very difficult. I suppose you have to be inspirational."

Story: The Ofsted report showed a very poor result for our KS2 and we wondered why since we knew they had been doing well. Alison checked the KS1 grades and found most of the 'w' grades (Working towards) had now got to a level 3 which was really good progress for this group. She took the results back to show the rest of the staff and there was a great feeling of relief. 2. Thomas was not achieving at KS 2 as well as at KS1. He had home problems but his lack of progress had been missed. Then Alison

used the test to advantage. She encourages him to think he could get a level 4. It was really working. It turned him around. 3. The boy who has style in his writing as well as being technically able, now that is excellent writing.

Conclusion: Size shouldn't matter but it seems to. It is the quality of the teachers that is important. There are pros and cons for all sizes. Smaller often means better quality because of interaction and less pressure on facilities such as computers and hall times. Large schools have to share time. But there are also pros and cons for mixed age and single age classes.

Cassandra is a new young teacher at the school where I used to be head. I have not taught with her but have got to know her through my visits to the school. She is from Australia where she had taught for 2 years, and has different perspectives to bring to the discussion. She expressed her great pleasure at having the chance to talk about education in this serious way. She said she got a lot out of it.

Concerns: It was interesting that she asked if I meant what she *SHOULD* feel concerned about or what she *DOES* feel concerned about. The difference being her frames of reference or the required frames of the present state system. I asked her what SHE felt concerned about. Her main concern was that though she agrees that children are achieving much more academically and have a much more detailed curriculum that it is at the cost of depth and interest which she felt was more important than testing. Children are not treated like children anymore, they are more like mini adults with little time to play or enjoy or investigate on their own. Too much pressure and anxiety not enough time to go over things. Children are aware of the levels and worry that as hard as they try they are not good enough. Cassandra would like to keep other records rather than levels and targets. She doesn't have the time, but does do journals, which helps her. No chance to follow up interests. No time for stories at the end of the day. Catch-up time. No time even to think whether it is what I want to do or not. She feels bound up, not free to do what she feels is right. Real teaching for her was in after school clubs and field trips.

Quality: Reading stories and discussing them and visualising what is happening. She was very clear about the importance she placed on the pupils reading journals. She read them and commented on them and this was her personal connection. They felt good about them too. After school clubs where bonding with the children was possible in a much more relaxed manner than the classroom. She enjoyed exploring ideas with no pressure to conform to someone else's agenda. Field trips at the beginning of the year which give the teacher time to assess children in an informal setting and these observations are very valuable. Real quality is not a list. You can't teach this quality or excellence in teaching. You might learn it from watching.

Story: One teacher who motivated all the children so that they thought whatever they were doing was just the best. It was her 'persona'. She never raised her voice, she listened a lot she respected each child as the individuals they were. She trusted them. "That sort of relationship is what I aim for."

Conclusions: Smaller is more personal. In Australia she was in a school of 800 but we had more resources (tennis courts). It is the relationships that are more important but wouldn't mind having both!

David was head of Letcombe when I was head of Hendreds and we worked together in the Federation of Ridgeway schools. We have been friends and working colleagues ever since. He was responsible for the amalgamation of two village schools now centred at Childrey. He is a very able head teacher and he is a talented musician and artist. He is quiet and determined and totally committed to the children and their education. His school retains the feel of the "old school" of excellence in all things that we worked for together. He is very nearly worn out by the stress and the unappreciated life style. He has both achieved the required results and retained his sense of professionalism. His school is growing in numbers and size.

Concerns: Discipline of children generally and parental lack of support for teachers which is making teaching which is already a hard job, even more difficult. Children suffer because of one child's bad behaviour. More stressful in every way. Good teachers are leaving the profession after only 2/3 years. Not enough pension to retire on. Too tiring now with all that is required. (But David does not get ruffled, relies on his own professional judgement and has found the strategies useful and helpful even though very demanding.) He worries that other schools feel overwhelmed and give up on art and music. "The broad and balanced curriculum" is not attainable by most schools now.

Quality: We have talked a lot about this and David felt that the new strategies had enabled small rural schools to be as good as any school elsewhere. He used the word excellent to describe some of the measures introduced in the curriculum. He feels that the strategies have helped him and his teachers to become better teachers. Teachers are all talking the same language using the same vocabulary. "We have a set progression in language and I like that." The maths has always been an obvious progression. Good quality will result from teachers using their own judgement about the appropriateness of the requirements in their particular school and with their children. "They are a guide and we must adopt and adapt". Do it all and have time for music and art. We can do it. We make the time if we think it is important. Many schools don't because there are no tests and they are not inspected to such a degree. Excellence? Long pause. It is all about relationships. Between adults and children in their care. The children sense it and respond.

Story: An inspector once answered my question about how do you know if it is an excellent school, with a story. He came in and said he had a way of knowing by fluttering his fingers as he waves his arms around. He has an 'ethos sensor' which is like a magic wand. Can't put it into words but you can sense it. He repeated what David himself believes that it is all about relationships. You could be a brilliant teacher but there you are shouting at the children. That doesn't work. High Quality is when there is confidence both in teachers and children.

Conclusions: Small schools have the best of all worlds in support and relationship building across the school for all children. In a large school (over 300) only successful when creating these same conditions that prevail in the small school.

Emily Bower

Emily was teaching in a special school and showed her ability with the results she achieved there. She was totally committed to the children but the frustrations in dealing with Ofsted and its recommendations became unbearable for her. She did not stay in teaching.

Concerns: Teaching is exhausting and when there is so little support it becomes too stressful. She would have continued but felt that all she did and wanted to do was considered really good by her head teacher and others but it had to be after or on top off all the requirements of the National Curriculum. It was a straight jacket for her. It allowed for no discussion and her pupils were really difficult requiring, in her opinion, very different IEPs. Children are expected to make linear progress. All the paperwork and the planning meant that she had no life out of school.

Quality: An excellent teacher knows her children. She has stood in their shoes. Good knowledge of the subject and of the children. Teacher understands where the boundaries are for different children. One needs to be stimulated another does not. Warm and caring teachers who listen and act accordingly are the very best and get the very best. An excellent teacher goes with it spontaneously and doesn't put it off till another time or more convenient time.

Story: Child of 8 who wrote with style and elegance but was considered a 'wild animal'. The child who was suspended and then came back and the discussions with the class enabled them to accommodate him and all children learned deeply from this experience. "The miracle is that he stayed all year." An elective mute who she learned to communicate with by hand signals. Eventually she managed full communication with him. One of the teachers who was so caring towards me as a pupil was excellent. She got me to speak out at 14. That was a real breakthrough for Emily.

Frankie Porter

Frankie is a teacher at Hendreds Primary School where I used to be the head. (Liz, who is the head, now, says she is an outstanding teacher, does brilliant work with the children and is very talented). She teaches all age groups particularly likes the Year 5/6 but feels the tests have spoiled these years. She is thinking about not continuing full time. (She subsequently became ill from the stress and became part time.) She assists the head in curriculum, teaching and administrative duties. She misses having her own group of children in her own classroom but feels she could not put herself through all that that involves again. The head gets to teach three days a week and this is a mutually beneficial arrangement. Frankie came to teaching as a mature student. She is a great supporter of the school and of my research.

Concerns: “It is all too prescribed.” Frankie felt the constraints of getting it all done properly and having to by pass really important questions and developments in children’s experiences. Some children are set up to fail. Children in tears over the test and some never do well enough. Can’t get a level 5 in sports or drama or art. Frankie herself was near to tears just thinking about it. She repeated often how sad it was. Real teaching went on after school or after the tests were done for the year. She wore herself out with worry.

Quality: Seeing progress and understanding it. Assessing all the time not just for a test. Talking with each child is much the best way. Before a unit of work and after. Before you can send them off in different directions. A balance of testing and own assessment. It’s really hard to say what excellence is in teaching. It is something you just know. It is definitely something to do with the way they interact, the teacher and the child or the class. You can’t learn this at college. You do it naturally. An excellent school has a buzz. It will have that buzz whether they have achieved well or not on the tests. The tests results depends largely on the group of children and they differ each year, but the school has an ethos that just feels like “This is the place to be.” If it didn’t have that buzz or excitement it would get all A grades and levels 5 and still not be a high quality school. Needs a good leader, a spokesperson for the school in the head. A head that trusts the staff and a staff that is conscientious. Education is about caring for children and their learning. A remark made about the children on a field trip meant a great deal to Frankie: “They seem to care about each other especially the more vulnerable ones.” She felt it was t the greatest compliment.

Story: Studying the Egyptians. She and her family created a classroom pyramid and the children had to find out who lived there and research ancient Egypt. They made tourist guides. “It just took off and it was magical!” It’s a learning time for the teacher too.

Conclusions: The right teachers who are doing what they feel is right is far more important than size of school. There is need for both large and small schools, and some children benefit by being in one or the other.

Hannah Yates

Hannah is a young new teacher at the school where I used to be the head teacher. We talked on my many visits and she was delighted to have her conversation taped. She was pleased to have a chance to have her say.

Concerns: Hannah was mostly concerned about the constraints she felt on her more creative side. She thought she could be more inspirational if she did not have to stick to the very strict timetabling required. She worried that she might find it too difficult and perhaps leave the profession. (She did leave after two years.) She worried that if she couldn't get excited about the work the children wouldn't either. If she did do something exciting she found that she had failed to cover something else. Then she got behind with the paperwork. And she didn't want to give all her time to school work. There is no time outside of school for doing other things. All the children doing the same is "incredibly boring."

Quality: A kind of magic. Excitement and involvement. Children developing as individuals not all the same.

Story: When I had a role play area with a reception class there was that kind of magic. It was wonderful to observe them. You could see their imaginations at work. I try and do that in the speaking and listening with drama but it is all laid down what you have to do.

Conclusion: I like working in the smaller schools where it is helpful and supportive. Larger schools have better and more resources, but it is the atmosphere. The big school that she was in she found 'regimented'.

Jill Dovey

Jill came to assist in my classroom one day a week for a term, when she was a student in the 6th Form and thinking about teaching as a career. I encouraged her to take up teaching which she did. She is a talented musician and has done wonders for the schools where she has taught. When she moved to Oxfordshire she joined the staff of the school where I was teaching. She won competitions with the school choir and they sang in the Albert Hall, London. She is now the Deputy Head there. Torn between state education and running her own drama school

Concerns: Jill's greatest concern is that the children are not getting the best from their teachers because of the paperwork, inspections and new strategies to implement. Teachers cannot give all their attention to the children. Experienced teachers are leaving because it is too demanding and not professional. Young teachers are leaving because they have no time for any life outside school. Quality of teachers is poor and less of them at interviews. A very prescribed curriculum that you can't deviate from. If you do, and she does, you have to answer in inspections and you are criticised for not doing what is laid down. It is no longer a discussion. It is closed. "The whole issue of professional judgement is becoming very murky." Education is undermined by anxiety over inspections rather than what and how you are teaching the children. Can't afford to live in expensive areas, so less teachers available. Cannot share age ranges or classes. Her school had to change the building. There is always the feeling of being inadequate no matter how hard you work. There is something really wrong when I love teaching, I think we have excellent teachers in this school and a wonderful school to work in and yet I don't know if I want to go through another Ofsted. I may leave because of the stress of it all and losing touch with what teaching young children is really all about.

Quality: There are excellent teachers but they are spread too thin. It's all in the relationship between the teacher and child or class. Balance between the requirements and what you feel is the right thing to be doing. Excellent teachers don't allow the system to undermine education. They fire the children up. They feel enthused about their work. There is real discussion where teachers listen to the children. You can feel high quality in a school. Teamwork. Know I don't want to be in that school to teach how can they learn you wonder? Would know where I want to be. The enthusiasm of children and staff. Teachers and children have to feel safe and comfortable, they have to enjoy it or there isn't much learning going on.

Story: Jill takes first few weeks to get to know her class. Takes the rap from Ofsted because she feels it is worth it. Her drama school 4-18 which she runs on weekends is very successful. All in the same environment. Jane does the drama Jill does the music and they put on two shows a year. They pay to use the school and this Saturday school has funded her own 2 daughters through university.

Conclusion: 190 is a good size for intimacy and enough variety on staff. Never thought 'bigger was better' not even with more resources. Knowing the staff and children and

working together is what makes for an excellent school. Very difficult in larger establishments.

John Tomlinson

John was professor of education at Warwick University when I met him through my close friend Viv Little who worked with him at Warwick University. He took a real interest in my research and we corresponded about it. He is a well-known academic figure. The transcript of his conversation appears on page 319.

Liz Tansley

Liz and I taught together in one school in Oxfordshire. She became Deputy at another school when I became head at Hendreds. Liz took over my headship (when I moved to the states) and has been there for all the changes. She has expanded the number on roll, staff, and the buildings. Her enthusiasm never tires, and I never miss a chance to visit and take part in what ever is going on at school. We both value our professional relationship and friendship. She has been very supportive of my research; we understand the nature of an on-going conversation. She is extremely artistic and able to work through all the difficulties and find strengths from the challenges. Nearly worn out by the stress and the unappreciated life style she has nevertheless both achieved outstanding results and retained her professionalism. I have had many conversations with Liz. I visit her school every year and we enjoy a close friendship. The transcript of her conversation appears on page 311.

Lynn Steel

Lynn became my school secretary whilst her two children attended our school. Greatly over qualified for the job she was a tremendous asset to the school. Extremely capable in the office she brought discipline to the administrative affairs. Her two daughters have both have done very well academically. The entire family became close friends.

Concerns: Too much workload for children. 6th Form very demanding for very able children what about the not so able? Prizes and awards all for the most able.

Quality: The primary school for our children was brilliant. It was for ALL the children. We could as parents talk to you about anything and everything. There never was a problem. It was the whole feeling of the school. I think smaller classes are essential for high quality. One-to-one is what counts. Even better in a smaller school. Bigger at secondary is OK because the children know how to look after themselves better. Need smaller schools for quality at younger ages. Mixed age groups are important they learn to care about others. A really good teacher will see some potential in every child. More interaction and closer relationships between teacher and pupil.

Story: W

Lynn gave me a story about the opposite of an excellent teacher. Her maths gave out the test result and hers was the worst and he made fun of her. . "I still hear a little voice inside me saying you can't do it." I carry an inferiority complex with me. Kate received an "Achievement in Excellence" award for English in the 6th. That teacher took a real interest in her work

Conclusions: Lynn wonders what can be done to help the less able achieve in this system of awards and excellence. Children need to feel valuable whatever they can or cannot do. "I never got the encouragement that I needed. I passed for grammar school so I must have been intelligent and yet I never did well at school." Lynn felt that her daughters' success was due to their ability and the teacher's relationships.

Margaret Parton

Margaret and I became friends when her son was in my class and later her daughter. She became school secretary in the school where I subsequently became the head. We were thrilled to be working together as a team. Margaret moved because of her husband's work and has been school secretary in several schools since. Her family are very close friends and Margaret and her husband have been staunch supporters of my research. I live with them when studying in Nottingham.

Concerns: There is not enough time for individual attention in their schoolwork and in the teacher child relationship. Quality of the education is not as high as it used to be because of the emphasis on tests rather than on individual achievement. "It is OK for average child, but there isn't one is there? It's like Mao and his little red book? As secretary she helped with the paperwork and was appalled at the amount and the waste of time filling in bits of paper when the teacher knew the children's abilities all along. It didn't make sense for the really good teacher to do the tests and spend time out of class classifying the results and doing all the paperwork while they got in a supply teacher to teach while she did it.

Quality: It needs an inspiring teacher. Teachers can do the assessment without tests. Balance between a national curriculum and regimentation. Mao's little red book! Teachers really cared about the children they interacted well. Small schools and classes allow for that more readily. A real partnership between school parents and community.

Story: She gave the class a photo presentation on her holiday in Egypt and was astonished at the diverse interest and questions. So unexpected. She had the time to talk about farming with a farmer's son and was fascinated by the use of words like "ancient Egyptians" as opposed to "living Egyptians." So exciting. This is not possible now. She reminded me of her son Steve with the mental maths. He could not wait to get to school and was competing with Susan Hall! "You opened up his eyes; you switched him on"

Conclusions: Large schools miss out on the family feel. Young children feel more secure and interact with all adults. In a large school the head and the secretary usually only know the naughty ones.

Mike Steel

Mike is the husband of Lynn Steel who was secretary at the school where I was head. Mainly as a parent and then also as a governor he was involved with the school in many aspects. His business background, gave him a different perspective on education from mine and we have had many intense discussions. His family became close friends.

Concerns: Funding regime was a big problem and still is. He wonders whether policy makers are in touch with the day-to-day issues of teaching and running a school. Constant changing of the goal posts. Arbitrary standards? An open market approach assumes that all who compete do so equally, and this is patently not true. How much of the education budget actually gets to the chalk face? It is a train, that the govt keeps going but is anyone getting on it? Not enough questioning at all levels of education.

Quality: For Mike in business it was all about 'Lean' practice where the pyramid of management is upturned. Waste is eliminated. Offer alternatives when disagree. Not some arbitrary global standard about what children should know at this or that age, but how far they have progressed. In business, industry it is different. Quality is a principle; it is the standard that is built in to the product. It is not something extra. There has to be some form of accountability. Can't just say that this is a good teacher. Quality is part of what you do rather than an end in itself. Minimising errors and changing as they evolve the process. Trust and understanding of what you want and how to achieve it. In other words communication is key.

Story: He told of his involvement as a governor in a tertiary college where the encouragement was to decide on the improvements and then be judged by those rather than being told, this is what you have to do and we will judge you by it.

Conclusions: Not a perfect world and no ideal education but communication and involvements of teachers, students and employers would go a long way to getting nearer to what is needed.

Sara Bowen

Sara is my daughter-in-law and is just becoming involved in the education of her two children. She worked in the banking sector until the birth of her first child. She was been home with them until the youngest started school. She is now working part time.

Concerns: Right level for each child. She wants them to enjoy school and be happy and get a lot out of it. Particular attention to speech as one of them has had speaking difficulties.

Quality: Lovely atmosphere. Teacher has time for each one and for parents. Children are relaxed and enjoying it but working at a very high level. It has a structure and is comfortable. There has to be a balance between the strict routine and the easy friendliness. Exactly the balance that we try to create at home. The teacher's attitude to the children that counts. The teachers are proud of where they are and what they are doing. They really care.

Story: For example when I dropped Will of this morning, Karen, one of the teachers asked if he had a nice birthday party yesterday. They remember things about each child. They remember the differences for each child. That was really nice. That makes each one feel a bit different. He can talk easily to them too, like he said, "I've got a new back pack." He's happy to share these things. The classroom has "a brilliant classroom feel for studying."

Conclusions: We are looking forward to school days and the conversations with them. Watching they grow and progress. Sara believed that small schools were ideal for primary ages. She particularly liked small rural schools.

Stuart Taylor

Stuart was head of one of the schools on the Ridgeway Federation. He went on to be the head of a larger school in the same area. Talented in IT and Design work he was the one who helped us all when computers first came in. He is still head of this school.

Concerns: Severe restriction or even loss of creativity in both the sense of teachers being creative with lessons and with including the expressive arts. Staff meeting are about curriculum and not about children. Catch up programmes for year one. Loss of time to do what you are really good at and really creative about as a teacher. Learning science and not doing it.

Quality: Save up time slots and use a whole day for art or history! There is "a bright interesting atmosphere in the classrooms where the children feel valued." Children have an interest in what they are doing in the school they can explain why they do things. Teacher having meaningful interaction not just lecturing or marking work.

Story: Jill does catch up after school in her own time to prevent the dilution of the curriculum. Stuart thinks we have a narrow goal orientated pyramidal curriculum. Jill was doing an outstanding piece of work on Macbeth and in the art time was giving time to explore a medium by saving up time. He was thrilled with the result of his own IT project with year 6 publishing a booklet with writing and pictures. Several did work at home on their own computers and really got into it. They made a slide presentation of nursery rhymes for the youngest. Parents got involved.

Conclusions: having year groups is certainly less onerous on us all, but not necessarily the best educationally. We did mixed groups and loved it. But under this regime it is so much planning that we take the easy way out. Bigger schools (460) have more adults for subject specialisms and responsibilities. Maybe better for the school. I was dedicated to our group ideas of mixed ages when I got this job. Now I can't do it.

Sue Mantell

Sue and I taught in an Oxfordshire school together. We shared a mixed age group of two classes. The years that we taught together I count as the most exciting and successful of my career. The field trips were excellent. She became the head in this school when I became head of another school. She later moved on to a larger school. Extremely well organised with outstanding ability in most areas of the curriculum, Sue is especially gifted in teaching dance and gymnastics.

Concerns: Total loss of creativity, total loss of independence of thought by children outside of academic subjects. And total inability of children to pursue any deep thinking right through to its end. Everything is timed. The really excellent schools got penalised along with those that did not achieve under the freethinking that we used to know. She has a new school and huge problems and poor results.

Quality: Talking about how children learn and how it is not all the same. We will be there in 5 years time with a thinner syllabus and more professional input. The teachers need to know their children, where they are at and what they need next. Ofsted are changing from checklists and all quantifiable results. An excellent school is only so on the SATS We know it is more. Look at how they are teaching. If good results and coaching and nothing else. Not excellent if they got that result. Children taking ownership of their learning. NC doesn't give the entitlement that children deserve. In science for instance can learn it up and not DO anything. Need to be able to do... to be able to explain/ show/ make. "What I meant to say is that we are not producing children who feel that knowledge is there to be challenged and questioned and widened and deepened. And we are not allowing children to follow their own route to learning, allowing them to access knowledge their way. Away from the classroom some will not know what skills they as individuals possess." Quality is not only having a good body of knowledge but it is in being an inspirational teacher.

Story: The exceptional teacher that will give the basic knowledge base and something more. "Let's ditch that! Now let's go! After school clubs is where we really get to teach "more appropriately".

Conclusions: People are more important than size. But smaller is easier to know all the children and interact properly with staff and pupils.

Tina Skett

Tina is my nephew's wife and is a primary teacher in Northamptonshire. She and I spend many hours discussing education. She has two children now and does shared class teaching. Very musical and highly intelligent she is passionate about young children and their learning.

Concerns: they are expecting far too much from our children at too young an age. Shakespeare at year 6 when struggling with sentence structure. Too regimented. Too much paperwork. Head are managers and not leading in teaching matters. Need a business head and a teaching head. Lack of respect for teachers from parents and community as well as pupils.

Quality: Topic web covering the basic minimum and plenty of scope for others to develop but not necessarily have to fulfil. Teacher needs to have input as to what is needed for these particular children at this time in this place.

Story: The Jabberwocky example of pupils' imaginative use of language. "So imagine my surprise (and the tear in my eye) when I was presented with a framed copy of two of my children's interpretation of the Jabberwocky based on a lesson taught months earlier. I think you must agree that this constitutes excellence on the part of the children and also an exceptional understanding of the construction of this poem."

The Dillyback

Twass today and the niddy bads,
Did shing and shingle in the rain,
All rillid were the piggysnouts,
And the tomb saths outgrabe.

"Beware the Dillyback my son!
The jaws that talk the claws that grind,
Beware the girly make up bird and bum,
The weird group that call and snatch."

He took his wealthy bride in hand,
Long time he fought the manky foe,
So dressed he by the scumscum tree,
And stood awhile in admiration.

And as in fluffish thought he stood

The Dillyback, eyes of ice,
Came binding up the squidgy woods
And snorted as it came.

10,11,10,11, and round and round,
The wealthy bride went chatter chatter
She left it bored out of its skull
And with its brains they went talking back.

“And have you killed the Dillyback,
Come to my arms my chattering children,
O brilliant day, Yadoo, Yaday!”
They all embraced at their joy.

Twas today and the Riddy Bads
Did shing and shingle in the rain,
All rillid were the piggy-snouts
And the tomb sathy outgrabe.

Be Natalie Burles & Laura Cramman

Conclusions: size around 250 enough staff and resources for all the needs. Too small all responsibilities on same person. Also if only 4 year 6 each child is 25% of the total results.

Tony Kenyon

Tony is the parent of two children that I taught in their primary years. He is also a working colleague of my husband and we have known Tony for well over 30 years. He was very keen to discuss my research since he is Managing Director with responsibility for five production plants. Quality is of prime importance to him.

Concerns: Tony's concerns were the responsibility of producing components that might fail. Such a failure, as in an aircraft would have fatal consequences. In education Tony thinks the teachers have higher expectations now than when he was at school. He did not have a quality education at all. Not till technical college anyway. There was never the expectation till he did well at college.

Quality: "First of all quality as far as the customer is concerned, I would call quality assurance. As a quality manager or as a managing director of a company I would say that quality is ensuring that everything that we do we have a set procedure, we know what we do, and everything that we produce is the same as the last one. It is repeated over and over. If the people doing the job don't follow the procedures then you are not going to get the same product every single time. For a good quality programme you have to have the means to trace every part of the process. Now a good quality system would not allow anything different to occur. If you fail an audit, what they do is they send in a team of quality auditors and they establish that you have good quality procedures. Are you doing the same thing consistently and correctly all the time? Then they will look at the plant records to find out if you have good trace ability. And then if you don't and you can't meet that audit then they will withdraw their approval. The most important thing about quality is understanding and meeting expectations. This applies to teachers as well as anybody else. If you don't understand the expectations, if nobody ever tells teachers or managers, if nobody explains what the expectations are then how do they know? If you don't set standards then you are at risk of reaching your own standards and they may not be good enough." Tony thinks you have to have leadership in an organisation and if you can't get consensus then you make the decision. The end product of education is to pass the exams. Taking out the variables for Tony is not the individuality of children but the expectation of the teachers. "The biggest variable is in the expectations of the teachers. It was not very high in my school I wasn't pushed. My parents didn't push me." "A good quality system is getting everybody in the process on board." "At the end of the day it should make sense."

Story: Facing the consequences of a quality failure. "The coating we were putting on we didn't prepare the surface properly for the coating to stay in place. It was a bit

daunting with a good possibility of getting my arse kicked, I went in this room with 10-12 managers and engineers sitting round and I had to face them. How can you assure people? It is about personal integrity and doing your best. It is really responsible, morally responsible, especially for the aviation.” For Tony this meant establishing that procedures were satisfactory and they were followed correctly. One project which he and his team thought they could do and in the end they couldn’t. “I had to go into the MD and say we are not capable of doing this work. We have tried but we have not got the capability.” Knowing your limits is important too.

Conclusions: With quality assurances in place as a teacher Tony would expect all the children in his class to pass every single examination that they have. “I know what I mean by a quality person. I think it is somebody that you look up to, somebody that states very, very clearly what his expectations are for himself.” Tony never stopped asking why and getting solutions. His teams were successful because he inspired confidence in them. “This is what we should be doing in education inspiring confidence in our children. There wasn’t a single teacher did that for me.” He agreed that conversation is sharing the same expectations of procedures. “That is straight out of the quality movement.” If there are differences then you have to make a decision. i.e. leadership in a group. It has to make sense.

Vivienne Little

Viv and I met at university as undergraduates in the same year. We have remained close friends ever since. Viv taught first in a secondary school then at the University of Warwick, School of Education where she specialised first in teaching history, her subject, and subsequently primary education where she was responsible for student teachers. She has constantly supported my research and through her I met and conversed with Professor John Tomlinson.

Concerns: "Mechanistic nature of goal setting". Thoughtful students found no room to question, less able did not ask the questions. "Children don't all learn according to a pattern. There may be stages, though those are disputed, but they don't go through them at the same speed or same time. One needs that flexibility of mind and also heart to be sensitive to how a class is responding or how a child is responding and to have something to do about it." Planning and goals may become an end in itself.

Quality: "Teachers themselves who have a love of learning." The courage and the knowledge to modify a lesson or plan as you are teaching it. Understanding what you are involved in a professional way calling for judgement and not just following the plan. "What really matters when you are in the classroom situation is what you have inside you to react to the moment." "Many of the people who were *best* at teaching were good at it not only because of their lively mind that I've talked about, but of their sensitivity to other human beings' reactions." Having very high ideals. Teacher educators have to support teachers in training in the very personal level of challenge and the vulnerability to judgements on all sides. "Teachers need to have the kind of confidence that allows them to stand tall in the face of judgement-immature judgement from the children- and judgement from the exterior- not always sympathetic, and your own self criticism." Successful schools need good leadership but the quality in that leadership that is most important is the "continuing conversation." Excellence is something that you know when you see it. Quality teaching has a ripple effect like a stone.

Story: The Science lesson where the teacher did not know the answer and sidestepped it. Explaining that she couldn't admit not knowing or the children would not trust her. Viv watched a large number of students giving the literacy hour. "Some did it very competently, exactly by the book and others did exactly the same but because they had internalised what the formula was based on and what it was trying to do, they were bringing something from their own stock of understanding and knowledge which took the material (this passage being looked at for example) and took the children beyond that immediate bit of learning into something like a great interest or wanting to know more, an excitement. And you could see the children suddenly grasping the concepts or

feeling their imagination kindled by the story or seeing they could go beyond in a mathematical pattern and so on. It is something to do with the person doing the teaching being *present* in the material. Being *present in* the classroom- (I've written something about this a couple of years ago). There's a difference between if you like, the word *delivering* of curriculum and *living* in the curriculum. If the teacher is living in the curriculum the child, most of the children will pick up something, which is more valuable than simply, "I've got my sums right or my sentence right." "

Conclusions: small often meant cosy and not enough challenge. Large often got lost, too big. Making units within sizable establishments so that you are known and you know those in your close field. Main thing is to be alive to learning, to challenge yourself and your pupils. A sense of the child being able to encompass the notion and be known to somebody, well known.

Summaries of 13 Conversations in USA May 2002

Bonny Cain

Bonny is superintendent of a school district in Texas comprising one high school, two middle schools and seven elementary schools, with a student population of over 11,000. When I first met her in 1989 she was the principal of an elementary school and I visited her school when I was the head of an Oxfordshire primary school. Our first conversation was as lively as this one. I worked as an elementary teacher in her district from 1992-1998 after I got my Texas work permit and qualifications.

Concerns: Bonny's concerns were primarily with funding and the shortage of good teachers. You would get many talented people in teaching if the pay was better and then society would afford teachers greater status. The tail is wagging the dog because the taxpayer is dictating to education. Single parents cannot do the job of two and parents and grandparents argue over children as if they were products or things. Bonny worries over the lack of touching and hugging in school because of litigation and feels that the relationship between teacher and student has become dehumanised. She feels that we have shifted our focus too far towards test taking skills and lost out on the creative and thematic work that used to be done.

Quality: This is seen in the *special* commitment that a teacher has to children. The teacher makes them, "Fall in love with learning." Despite poor homes or lack of support, one significant person can make a difference. Excellence means getting the best for every child and each child feels better for having been at school. Neither teachers nor children fear being wrong, they may be messy in their work and in their classrooms but they are excited. Personal interaction is the heart of excellence. You can't teach this sort of commitment to teachers. You can prepare good teachers technically but the excellent ones have that special something you cannot teach.

Story: A third grade teacher was reading a story one afternoon as Bonny, her principal at that time was doing one of her routine observations in the classroom. (Principals do 10 such unscheduled observations a year as part of a teacher's annual evaluation). The class was held spell bound as she was by the story and by the teacher. "It was just the place to be." I stayed till she finished I could not tear myself away. She was a teacher that did not have problem children up at the office like other teachers. She held the children. "To get this you have to behave as if this is the most important thing."

Conclusions: Better pay would get more quality teachers. Smaller schools (300) need to make sure they have support staff like nurse and librarians but big schools (900) have real difficulties." I would love for you to tell me what it takes to get quality education!"

Christie Jarrell

Christie taught in Second grade when I was the grade leader and subsequently taught in Special Education in the same elementary. She is quiet and purposeful in the classroom and as a young new teacher brought new ideas to our grade meetings. At present she is at home with her two children aged 4 and 2 and is planning to return to teaching when her eldest is enrolled at 5. (She did)

Concerns: Christie's main concern was for the child's self esteem. She felt not enough was done for children to make them feel good about their learning, especially children with special needs. She was very concerned that teachers spent little or no time actually talking to individual students and therefore did not know them in any real sense. She felt that insensitive teachers ruined many students quality of life. She related stories to this effect.

Quality: This is seen in the interaction between teacher and student. It is seen in showing respect for a child's efforts. Not tearing up work as unsatisfactory. You can still have high expectations and teach to the student's strengths without destroying their self-confidence in their apparent failures or weaknesses. An excellent teacher is really interested in what they are teaching, they have good knowledge and they share their interest. It is all about communicating. A high quality education would show procedures and routines that are meaningful to the students and there would be abundant patience. You can get a feel for a school or a classroom just as you do for a person. You just know it.

Story: 1. Christie had a non-reader in her special reading class. His last teacher said he just didn't try he was lazy. She had one to one time with him and sat on the beanbag and read to him from his choice of storybooks. Gradually he read along with her and eventually he read with his own confidence. All along she was criticised for not teaching him his phonics or correcting him when he substituted words. He was 8 years old and didn't know his sounds. She wanted this child to want to see that reading was enjoyable. She felt she was able to help him by not pushing in the usual way. Sometimes she felt you had to use your own judgement. Several years later she met his mother who admitted she was worried that it seemed that she wasn't doing much to help her son. But the mother said that Christie had made a real difference in his life and he had gone on from strength to strength in school.

2. She remembered me making books with the children which they wrote and illustrated. I got them to write about what they were interested in and showed them how to make the pages and the illustrations. They saw they entire project from start to finish and they had a real hardbound book to take home with them. It was fantastic for those children.

Conclusions: Too much emphasis on test taking and associated skills too little time for real interaction. Enjoyment and learning seem to be things of the past. Smaller schools and classes were a real bonus. She could not do what she did in larger classes.

Cindy Schnaubelt

Cindy taught in second grade when I was the grade leader and was very conscientious and quietly efficient. She moved to another district to be nearer her home but after starting in the school where she was interviewed she was moved to another school and was not very happy. (The school she was in had fewer pupils than anticipated so she was moved to a school that had a higher enrolment than expected.) Cindy had a class made up of 'extra' children from several classes. We discussed our own metaphor of teachers being moved around like furniture and children like clothes rearranged in a closet.

Concerns: Cindy's school was in a rather depressed area and she was aware of the lack of family support for children. The teacher may be the only person that really cares about them. There seemed to be little conversing if any at home for some children and no shared reading or story times. One child in the first grade aged 7 was caring for mother dying of cancer and she seemed to be running the home. She felt deeply for these children and wanted to help them but often felt overwhelmed. She thought that there were not many teachers who interacted well with the students. Those that did were really outstanding people. She did not feel outstanding; she felt she only just coped.

Quality: The kind of teacher that I would want for my own children. One that cares about what they are doing and what the children are learning. Interaction with each one. Cindy thought that the excellent teachers she had known usually didn't fit in very well. They did things their own way and they got results. Cindy believed we could learn from other exceptional teachers but we had to make it our own or it wouldn't work.

Story: 1. When I did the book making with my class I encouraged Cindy to do the same thing. She said it was a real turning point for her as well as the children as she had learned so much. "It is still the best thing I ever did."

2. Her own daughter's favourite teacher was not one Cindy would have chosen but her daughter really flourished with her. The teacher was good at art and allowed her to express herself in this way. Her daughter had never forgotten the experience and it gave her real confidence in other areas after that year with her.

Conclusions: When there is a group of teachers working together such as when we were together everyone benefits; teachers, children and of course the school. These smaller units were important but it is the people in them that matter. Cindy really felt that teachers need to support each other.

Crissie taught in 2nd grade when I was the grade leader. When the school started a Gifted and Talented programme she taught the 2nd grade GT class. She moved to 3rd grade the same time as I did and has subsequently moved to middle school (Grades 5-7) with the GT programme. We always had a lot to talk about as she did most of her work in groups and she was interested in thematic work too. Her interest in high school gymnastics, in which her two children excelled, led to their school team being established and entering competitions at national level.

Concerns: The TAAS test drives the whole system. It is a restricted curriculum and teachers are teaching to the test. The children are the losers every time; they do not get a well-rounded education. In GT I do not have these pressures but parents are not always supportive of the extended curriculum. As an example Crissie said that one parent did not agree with her choice of Harry Potter as a suitable book for third grade because it had a 'pagan' influence.

Quality: Teachers who are excellent will get the children interested and will get them learning by focusing in on what the children want to learn about. The children will develop their own sense of education. The teacher will run challenging and exciting programmes. (Crissie was using a very intense grammar programme, 'Magical Lens' that she was very keen on.) Really good teachers are sensitive to each and every child; to their needs and their learning environment. The teacher needs to look out for the ones that need extra help. It's not just about the academics, but the whole child. A holistic approach to teaching with methods that a teacher enjoys is the key to very high quality in education. A great teacher is never finished learning.

Story: Crissie tackled Fairy Tales in a new way that was very exciting for her class and produced some really good results. She set up trials. A lawyer came and explained legal terms and how the court system worked and then the children devised their own mock trials of Peter Rabbit or Goldilocks for breaking and entering or the weavers in the Emperor's New Clothes for fraud and robbery. She said it resulted in the highest level of thinking in 3rd graders ever in her experience. I could feel her excitement as she told me all about it. She couldn't wait to do the next one and the children were the same.

Conclusions: All teachers should use GT methods and have smaller classes. GT class size should definitely be less than 20 to do it right.

Denise Petri

Denise was the principal in one of the schools I taught in. She had been an English teacher in the high school before she became principal. She subsequently became an administrator in the district as Director of Curriculum and Instruction. She and I had many long conversations about primary education and we worked very well together. She supported my unorthodox methods, e.g. integrated activities and group teaching at tables rather than teaching from the lectern with rows of desks. She encouraged my class productions of musicals and plays.

Concerns: Her main concern was "The factory model of pushing kids through the system." Teachers are more tied to accountability than to learning. She had written a dissertation on teacher's belief systems and knew from her research how difficult it was to change beliefs. Teachers who are committed to learning and the children; they are not "teaching ducks to dance." There is much that is good coming out of the accountability ethic and better teaching can be observed but the testing and emphasis on scores make it all less than education. Denise felt that there may be underlying political aims in education which may be why there is little emphasis on questioning.

Quality: Quality education happens when teachers are tapping into what children already know and expanding on it. They are making life-long learners. Teachers who are mavericks are often the ones who have this excellence. They are the models to emulate but each in their own way. They have a passion for learning and for the children's learning. Their students succeed as learners and generally do well in tests as well. It is the joy of learning the "Look what I've done!" A high quality education is one that makes you equal to any student anywhere. It shouldn't matter what school or college you attend if you have the best teachers and the best resources. Setting expectations high and not settling for a pass or what is adequate, having faith in the students. These things count for quality. "He may be picking his nose now but you can see him as a future astronomer!" These teachers can see it, they have the vision and they have the magic.

Story: Denise chose to tell a story about me and my student Mary. Mary was from a very poor family and arrived at school with her hair in tangles and often without proper clothing. She remembers that I looked after her and cared for her. "You made things happen for that child. You would have a brush and comb and a toothbrush ready for her each day. You had spare underwear for her just so that she would feel confident in class." She succeeded in making huge progress the year she was with you and you two still correspond. That is what makes for high quality. It is making the connections. Not always academic but they are always there as well.

Conclusion: smaller schools are better in that teachers get to know each other better and relate better, so do students. Smaller units can be created inside the bigger ones. It is the people that count really.

Ethel Bagshot

Ethel taught a 2nd grade GT. She had taught special Ed students and had taught in the regular grades as well. Her room was always messy and busy and she had food and snacks available all the time. She was so enthusiastic that she irritated a lot of teachers. She wants to teach as long as she lives and can't imagine working with 'boring' adults all day long. She describes herself as having a Peter Pan mentality; she never wants to grow up because that means losing her curiosity. She and I talked a great deal and enjoyed out of school time together too. Her daughter is training to be a primary teacher now.

Concerns; She is mostly concerned that she is the sole carer of most of her children. There is such a variety of cultures and languages and abilities in the classroom and the teacher has to deal with all of them. All of them are supposed to fit into the same mould for the test. Children and parents want their own gratification now and the children are so needy. Schools have to raise children not just educate them. Parents don't have the time to raise their children. Day care centres don't allow children time to dream. Oral language is lacking at the early stages for most children. Children are treated as part of their parent's list of assets: One home, two cars, two bathrooms, and two kids.

Quality: Quality education is where we learn to have empathy for others; learn to live in someone else's shoes. To have time to dream and look at the clouds and be children not mini adults (with parents who are adults and not overgrown children). Teachers have to teach the heart first and then the head. Children need to feel safe to have a quality education. "It's simple really; you just have to love kids." Different treatment for different children is creating respect and equality; it is not doing the same for each one. You need to push one and give another slack. "You know when, when you love them." It's having curiosity, always learning always evaluating yourself as a teacher and being humbled by it every day. Respect children and they will learn. Find out what interests them and you will know how to extend them. There is no such thing as an excellent teacher. There is too much to learn and you never reach every child every day. You can be very good but not excellent. Excellence is unattainable.

Story: Her class was very self-centred and Ethel wanted them to learn empathy. They constantly made a mess and she constantly reminded them of how difficult they were making life for the janitors who clean in the evening. She was moved to tears when she found a child's note to the janitor apologising for the mess and asking for their model to be left as it was as they would clear up when they had finished. She said, "I raised them right!"

Conclusions: She liked the idea of multi-aged classes or at least corridors where there would be a free flow for children of differing abilities and interests. Teachers supporting each other and the entire range of children. She thought the GT methods would be mandated for all children and she was getting out of the programme so that she could

teach back in the regular grade. Smaller schools were always preferable both from the teacher's and the child's point of view. More interaction and more support.

Joanne was my neighbour for the 8 years I spent teaching in Texas. She had been a high school principal in a public school and was now home schooling her two teenaged boys. The boys had done well in Montessori school until they were aged 8 and 6 but attempts at both a public and a private school convinced her to home school. She organises courses for the students of other home school parents and runs a shop for the books and supplies they need. She is passionate about education and especially home schooling. She has appeared on TV and in the press debating educational issues. She is extremely well informed and dedicated to supporting parents who want to home school.

Concerns: Public education is 'dumbed down' so that more children pass the test. There are lower standards for teachers entering the professions than ever before. At present it takes a 3.9 GPA to get into engineering but only a 2.5 to get into education classes. (Grade Point Average which roughly translates into 4=A 3=B 2=C). The low pay and the increasing demands for paperwork and the poor standard of teachers, means that principals are micro managing (and the state is also.) Administrators are not compassionate. Learning is not fun anymore. The Christian schools are too narrow on their outlook and the public schools are too lax. There is too much sport and too little academics in American High Schools.

Quality: you will get high quality when you allow teachers to do their own thing with the curriculum. Teaching for life-long learning is the most important part of education. Teachers have to get out of the box and so do children. Well-directed inquiries and research are what lead to life-long learning. Working for a length of time on an interest at some real depth. Multi-aged groups enhance learning too. An excellent teacher expects high standard and she usually gets it. An excellent teacher will be able to get any child to learn.

Story: 1. There was this principal who was loved by all the staff and children. The children ran up to her and wanted to talk to her. You just went into this school and you knew it was where you wanted your kids to be. 2. The chemistry teacher from the local college gave chemistry group lessons for the home school group who were 'graduating' from school. (i.e. leaving school at 18). She just loved teaching and she loved her subject. She always helped those whose experiment failed or didn't get it the first time. She would stay on 2 hours longer if necessary just to help one student get through the set work required. She gave Joanne's sons an afternoon in her lab explaining a Geiger counter after they had asked a question about it. She was compassionate towards the very bright and the slower ones too.

Conclusions: There is need to tackle pay and then we might get the quality of teachers we need. Home schooling is a mission. It used to be for religious reasons that people chose to home school. Now it is because of their high achievement. (See The Right

Choice by Christopher Klicka for these details.) Big schools are not conducive to high achievement for all students.

Kathy was the speech pathologist who was based in one of the schools I taught in. She was responsible for several schools during the time we worked together. I formed a close relationship with her as she provided services for some of my pupils and we found that we shared many views about education especially the speech impaired, language impaired and hearing impaired that she dealt with. Her professional knowledge and skills in helping teachers as well as children gave insightful and different perspectives which I valued greatly. She has since become responsible for all special services in the district.

Concerns: The TAAS is a real concern. It consumes teaching time to the detriment of time given to talking and getting to know students. Teachers and parents have no time for talking to children. There are more and more requirements and more paperwork, especially for each of the students that she had in her programme. She thought that evaluation in terms of numbers especially the big one (TAAS) at the end of the year is neither right nor useful. Good teachers are leaving because of burn out.

Quality: Oral language is the basis for all good academic work. Language enables us to experience everything in greater depth and variety. Teacher who take the time to talk and to listen to their students and spontaneously respond are those that will give high quality teaching. I suggest talking in the car and not having the radio on or the TV. Conversation is the basis of education and really good teachers understand this. Their teaching is a continuous conversation. Great teachers know which students don't get called upon much and give them a chance. Really great teachers burn out. They cannot give up on one thing. Continuity makes for a quality education. Great education is a forever feeling. It is an internal reward not external awards and certificates.

Story: 1. Kathy's son is seriously ADHD and when his 2nd grade teacher said she was 'excited' about having him in her class it was the beginning of a tremendously important relationship for both of them. He was not only accepted but encouraged and made great progress because the teacher did not pre judge him and really worked with him and showed real care and concern. She made allowances and he loved going to school. He has continued to do well. This is a great success story.

2. Kathy and a teacher in the regular kindergarten class decided to try something a bit risky with a PDD (Pervasive Development Disability) child. They structured a programme for him to be included in the regular class an hour each day. It was risky and all the odds were against it, but they both felt this was what was needed for this particular child. They were proved right. He eventually integrated fully into the regular classroom. Kathy was so excited telling about this story. It was striking a blow for using their own professional judgement.

Conclusions: Too big a school and all the resources are strained. Lunch starts at breakfast time, there is more expense more traffic more problems for the same number

of administrators. There is little chance to talk with the principal. In smaller classes and schools Kathy felt she would be able to integrate much of her work in with the teacher.

Kerry Tinklepaugh

Kerry taught with me for 2 years in 2nd grade before she returned to her native Buffalo (NY) where she is still teaching. She was a young new teacher who started with a master's degree in education. Her classroom was immediately across the corridor from mine and we spent a lot of time together, planning, evaluating and talking. We still correspond and discuss education by e-mail.

Concerns: Kerry's real concern was that the assessment of teachers and of students was done by testing that was set by non-teachers. She felt that the emphasis on testing devalued her role as a teacher. Her principal was more interested in why 7% failed than why 93% passed in her class. This being their first public test at 7 years of age. Teachers do not want to teach certain grades because of the testing requirements. (4th grade for them) She worries about the district laying down what is to be taught in each 6 week period and that all students are expected to be at the same point. Any teacher, anybody, knows that this is not possible.

Quality: Teaching the whole child and teaching a love of learning. Students should love to be in school and learning. A great teacher would do this and have them ready for the next grade and be consistent. Is it possible? She asked. At least it is what she was aiming for. Such a teacher would find time to re-teach when students needed it. There are exceptional teachers and we can learn from them.

Story: 1. The teacher who could read stories so that children were totally engrossed. She had polite and interesting students who seemed to be more tolerant of others. They were learning real life skills. She was exceptional. 2. The teacher who was teaching about the development of the colonies. Students made alphabet books using their knowledge. They were really excited about it. 3. When Kerry teaches letter writing she does the entire process from the letter to the post office, making the journey by foot to the local post office and having them frank the envelopes. It is a really worthwhile piece of teaching. 4. Her students were having a hard time with subtraction and she found that parents were showing them 'tricks'. She did a parents evening on teaching subtraction using the base ten blocks and the response was overwhelming. So many had never understood it before. Their children had good support at home.

Conclusions: Kerry has had experience in schools with 980, 350 and 150 children. The smaller was preferable in every way. Knowing the children and their families and their continuity counts for a lot when you want to reach the whole child. Knowing the community and teaching over a period of time in one school helps in a larger school. The interaction of teacher and student is what counts.

Lynn taught 3rd grade when we were in the same school. I was the counsellor for a year before I was appointed as a teacher and I got to know her because of the interaction with some of her students. I also did class lessons on behaviour and her room was always welcoming. She had style and her students behaved well. It was a remarkable classroom to work in; there was an almost tangible sense of purpose. In another school, she was in 4th grade, and a team leader as I was in 2nd grade, so we had many discussions about education after meetings and before school started. She continues to teach and we have remained friends.

Concerns: The low level of expectation that is evident in the tests. Filling in the blanks is not what education is about. The tests do not prepare students for projects where they think things through for themselves. They are not able to do creative work, they arrive at 4th grade expecting to be told and then to reproduce what they know. There seems little expectation of personal challenge, problem solving or thinking. Whole class lecturing has never seemed right at this age. And yet it is the norm. A real concern is that she will work with students and get them through the test but they then do not qualify for the support they still need to continue making progress. Results of the tests do not tell you why they got something wrong. Often it is a reading rather than a maths problem in the maths tests. Dwelling on the test result is not helpful.

Quality: Quality in education is in having your own high standards and accepting nothing less. Excellence is not attainable. It means you have got it all. You have done it all. That is impossible. 'C' used to mean average, but now 'A' is considered average, so what standards are there for really bright students? Quality teachers are those that are called to do this work. You can tell by their concerns that they are really committed to it. They care about the students and their learning and not about changes in the dress code. Quality teaching is when the teacher can monitor the whole class and they see what is missing, they know what to do for each one. This is something you cannot teach. This awareness of children and what they need. This sensitivity is also quick to grasp the significance of whether this one needs pushing or that one needs cuddling.

Story: 1. She had one troubled student who had never managed a full year in school. He had many difficulties and I got 4 different teachers involved with him for different areas of the curriculum. I knew I couldn't do it all alone. He did well and stayed the whole year. He did not want to stay away. "Wow! I am smart now!" 2. One teacher in the whole of her life that she would call excellent. She could raise the lowest set of children right up to pass the test and even more. She did not teach tricks, she got them to understand like no one I have ever seen. She was entirely dedicated to those children (to the exclusion of her own, who reminded her that they were her children too!) She would plan and work and evaluate and re plan all the time. She never stopped doing whatever it took to get those children to where she thought they ought to be.

Conclusions: Small schools get a better camaraderie among staff and that creates a better atmosphere for the students. Teamwork is important and so is continuity. Smaller schools provide these opportunities. Multi-age classes mixed age groups) would be even better. Less well off areas offer better opportunities to teach where children are still children and not so precocious.

Marilyn Andrus

Marilyn is a high school teacher in the same district where I taught. She taught the home economics classes and then the teenage parenting classes among many others. She was outspoken about the lack of sex education in schools, but remained within the school programmes. She now supervises the teaching of homebound students in the district. She and I became friends because our husbands worked together and we met socially. We still correspond.

Concerns: It is society not schools that have changed and now that children need entertaining and cannot take discipline or control there are huge problems with behaviours. Teachers are required to cover more material than ever and tests are the evaluation of them. There is no flexibility for teachers to use their own ideas and no time for the one-on-one that is often the only way to help a student. Size of school is a major problem when they are so large, because you cannot know all the children so the staff cannot work so readily as a team. The isolation of children, and teachers, is the result. If you cannot personalise teaching it is often meaningless. Now we can't touch a student, we can't discuss behaviour unless they are a student in your class and it makes for less support for each other in matters of discipline.

Quality: Teaching children and not subjects is what brings quality in education. When the teacher relates as a person and shares beliefs and values that makes learning intrinsic and meaningful for life. How to manage in the world and to cope with relationships is more important than knowledge of subjects. Quantity does not equate with quality. Time spent enjoying family and/or friends is so important and some students have not had this at home so we must do it in school to give them a quality education. Really excellent teachers do not short change the kids but they short change themselves and burn out. We are losing many of our best teachers.

Story: 1. Marilyn told me of a student of hers who was 14 and pregnant and had such a difficult time staying in school. She worked with her and acknowledged her difficulties. It was very rewarding for Marilyn to receive a letter from the girl's parents to say she had graduated successfully from college and they attributed it largely to the way Marilyn had handled her at her most difficult time. 2. Marilyn was in a MacDonald's having lunch when she saw a scruffy looking individual eyeing her. She said she moved her purse closer to her and averted her eyes. He finally came up and beamed at her. He had known her as a teacher in the high school and said he knew he could come and talk to her because she always smiled.

Conclusions: We need PE back on the schedule for the health of our children. Some of the other "Fluff" might well be coming back too!

Michelle Gonzales

Michelle was a first year teacher in 3rd grade when I was also in that grade. We taught across the hall from each other and we spent a great deal of time planning and discussing and talking together. She found her first year tremendously difficult, having a particularly difficult set of students with particularly aggressive parents, but she never lost sight of her ideals. She is still in teaching but has had time out for the birth of her own two girls. We were firm friends and have remained so.

Concerns: The children who fall between the cracks are Michelle's chief concern. When she needs to get help for a student she is thwarted by differing diagnoses and tests and gets left to deal with it herself. The way the principal and other administrators are friends with some of the teachers and not others creates an uneasy environment to work in. Lack of continuity is a big problem. Current files on children are not shared with the teachers and we are not encouraged to write anything personal or confidential. Basic background information is not considered to be essential for the continuity of care.

Quality: getting to know the children is the most important thing. You can really help them and support them if you know them. Teaching can be more effective when you make it more individual. This is what Michelle feels is the professional part of her work. You need to know about their home their interests their family in order to know them well. It is not enough just to be concerned with their academic skills. Quality of teaching will tell by the progress made in the year and the sense of satisfaction in being instrumental in that. Really caring what happens to each child each day. Caring is what really counts. When the teacher is committed the children get excited about learning. It isn't just a job. An excellent teacher wouldn't be at the lectern all day she would be on the floor or sitting beside students, helping them and encouraging them. Excellent teachers know they don't know it all and they are reflective not jumping on the latest bandwagon.

Story: Michelle had a child who was not writing well despite being at grade level in all other areas. She had her tested for special difficulties and the report came back that she had Kindergarten level writing and everything else at 3rd grade. She didn't qualify for any special help and Michelle was very upset about that. No advice, nothing. But she spent time with her as she does with all her students and she just emphasised how good she was at reading. She started the year by writing about her favourite book: This is about a girl, and nothing more. By the end of the year she was writing a paragraph. It was amazing to compare and to see the progress. This gave Michelle the confidence to do what she knew needed doing. She felt very let down by the school but she found a way of helping this student succeed.

Conclusions: You can't be prepared for everything and the first year in teaching is so difficult she didn't know how she got through it. If you have a real love of kids and want to help them you can find a way and they will learn the most important thing that you

care about them. Big schools are very lonely places and impersonal. The smaller school Michelle moved to was so much better for team work and supporting each other.

Sue was the grade leader in the 3rd grade when I taught in that grade too. She had always taught that grade for all her 18 years of teaching. She had moved classroom twice. She was exceptionally worried about her students and their success in the test. She felt that the results really reflected on her and that mattered to her enormously. She and I had different ideas about the importance of tests but we got on very well as a team. She and I have remained friends and correspond occasionally.

Concerns: Sue's concerns were mostly to do with society and how it had changed for the worse in her opinion in its care of children. Parents don't have time for their children and teachers don't understand how difficult it is for single parent families who are trying to do everything themselves. It is the child that gets cheated in the middle. Teachers and schools have to be the family for some children. Many teachers are not sympathetic towards parents. There is too much emphasis on the TAAS. "Even though I have done the same test for 18 years, I still spend the whole year worrying about it". There is nowhere else in life that so much depends on ONE test. Only allowed to be teaching reading and mathematics for 4 weeks before the test nothing else (Science Social studies music art etc)! Now there is cheating over scores. We know that problem solving and getting along with others is more important in the long run. Not fair on the children. If you are in teaching and you really don't care about those children you shouldn't be in teaching at all.

Quality: Education is ideally a three way process the child teacher and family. School should be a place where they learn at their own pace and for differences in achievement and talents to be acceptable. In an ideal situation Sue says that she would not have say "no time for questions we need to move on." She feels she doesn't have time to explore their interests because the curriculum has to be completed. A high quality teacher is one that cares about the children cares about their learning, their progress, and their results. It really means something to the teacher when a child makes progress. A great teacher will do whatever it takes to get them to learn what they need to know. Real high quality teaching and learning is about life-long learning. Such deep learning cannot go on if a child is struggling at home or at school. One person has to care enough. It is that trust between a teacher and a child that makes for quality.

Story: Sue had a teacher that she didn't really like at all. She was very strict and allowed no let up. Sue thought she had it in for her because she just kept on pushing and challenging her. She realised later that it was this teacher that gave her confidence and high expectations for herself. She believes it was a turning point for her and she would never have done so well if this teacher had not cared enough to push her and make her work.

Conclusions: When Sue was in a big school it was difficult to work as a team now in a smaller set up it is much better. When there are 4 teachers in a team she felt they got things done, whereas when we had 10 in the team it was fragmented. She was already

worrying over the new edict that would not allow any 3rd grader to go up to the 4th grade if they failed the reading test. (NCLB No Child Left Behind. Bush). We talked a lot about 'retaining' and 'promotion' as it is called in the US.

APPENDIX B

Dialogues

1. Is education for the state or the individual?
2. Is the business model useful?
3. Is childhood different from preparation for adulthood?
4. How do we balance long and short term goals?
5. What does quality in education mean?
6. How does time affect the intrinsic aims of education?
7. What role does the concept of care play?
8. Does the size of school matter?

DIALOGUE 1 In text

DIALOGUE 2 Is the business model useful?

P: We need to get back to that comment of about old fashioned and new fangled business methods.

C: I am really interested in what is going on in industry at the moment and for once I think we in education could follow their example.

P: Good gracious C! You have deplored the business model ever since I can remember and now you are saying just the contrary.

C: There are many aspects of the model that are misleading and should never have entered the vocabulary in my opinion. Children (or education) as products instead of living, changing, illogical and imaginative beings (or concepts), delivering lessons instead of giving them, quality assurance instead of determining success by results based on predetermined standards of achievement and so on. Even some of our teaching colleagues use these words easily now. They have become the language of policy.

P: The trouble with this is that it becomes the only acceptable language of education and this precludes much reflective thought. I am preoccupied with this very subject at the moment and am finding myself referring to what might be called "old fashioned" words and ideas. That is why those comments about business were particularly interesting.

C: Well let us start with what seems like the beginning. The business ethos over the last twenty years has been the rising star of world economy. Business schools, business models, a fascination with business "a passion for excellence."¹ It was not surprising

¹ Lee Iacocca and Tom Peters for instance

that at the ministerial level it was thought to be time to incorporate these highly efficient and successful ideas into our schools.

P: Not surprising to find the language because it was and still is very fashionable, but to incorporate the ideas made me for one, very concerned. I could not and still do not see the relevance of the parallel between schools and a business no matter what it is. Just as I cannot understand why a doctor or nurse is now called 'your health care provider'. Either it is a tautology, in that we know that they are in the health profession and they render us care, or it is mischievous in that it means that there is something that they provide us with, like a shopkeeper or a manufacturing plant, which is what takes care of us. It has de-humanised the doctor. It is the same problem with education. The teaching has become dehumanised.

C: now wait a minute. Before we get too deep into the emotion that all this entails, let me start off by saying what I meant about old-fashioned business methods. And I did not say new fangled. That's your embellishment.

P: Point taken. I am showing my colours before the discussion has begun.

C: Now I know you feel strongly about this but let us begin with what I meant. In the old fashioned model the workers know their places and the bosses lead from the top and out in front.

P: Sounds like today's requirements in education...

C: Don't interrupt till I have finished please. 'Superiors' lay down the policies and the procedures in the organisational structure, and they might or might not be supervisors.

P: Still sounds like...

C: The end product and the bottom line are just about equal in importance. The product needs to satisfy the customer and the company needs to make a profit.

P: and this is where we get alternative definitions of education in terms of what the customer wants, who ever the customer is, and the schools need to be seen to be successful (largely because of the enormous expenditure from the public purse).

C: many teachers do not have a problem with these ideas at all.

P: That in itself is a real concern. It shows that the language has carried those ideas into their thinking. And I think it has done so at the expense of teachers who have always known what they were doing and doing it well.

C: Well, in the new ideas about running a business, and these are ideas that have been written about for forty years and practised for twenty years or more, there is greater emphasis on decision making being pushed down as far as possible with the shop floor taking more responsibility for improvements and understanding the entire process that they are part of. There has been a shift in understanding the psychology of management in that with these new ideas all levels of employees are expected to make a contribution and to be valued for whatever they contribute and to be remunerated accordingly. So with what is now called 'lean' practice management have inverted the pyramid. And this is where teachers should regain their professional standing and value.

P: Still sounds like the boss gets paid more than the workers.

C: This is pure capitalism I agree, but it is a bit more enlightened in some companies.. The product improves by using the talents and skills of all employees and all benefit from improved quality of the product and resultant higher profitability. Many companies have profit sharing too, which of course makes sense in the big picture.

P: that seems a more equitable way of going on in business.

C: So what I am saying is that importing the old ideas about business is quite different from importing the new and current practices that we are seeing in industry today. The new ideas can teach us a great deal about successful management.

P: and is successful management what education is *all* about?

C: No. It isn't what education is *all* about but it is about how schools are run.

P: Do you think we can separate the management of schools from education?

C: They are part of the whole. But just as in industry there are ways of using management to assist you in achieving your aims and there are ways that are not so good.

P: Running good schools requires good management but it is not necessarily what makes a good education.

C: I can have an excellent management team at the plant, but if the people working at the machines do not or will not produce whatever it is my good management is no use. In the past it has often been that good products were turned out even with appalling management strategies. People have received an excellent education despite appalling buildings or adverse conditions. The best, the optimum result is where you marry good management with top class people at the sharp end. Great teachers and good management get my recommendation. But I am the last one to say that running all aspects of a school like a business is the way to go.

P: What is the inverted pyramid you refer to that teachers would benefit from?

C: It is the empowering of the work force. They used to be the bottom of the pyramid, the most in numbers with the least say in matters. Now it is seen that they are the most useful. They are the ones that create the good; they are ones that add value, as people in business would say.

P: And you see that is where the teachers are.

C: Definitely. Schools have no value without teachers. They are the ones that make the system work and they are the ones that actually do the fundamental job. The head and the administration are an important and necessary part of our large institutionalised system of education, but education would still go on without all of that. You yourself have said many times that sitting under a tree listening to nothing but stories is an education. And how recent is this modern idea of schools for all anyway?

P: I begin to see that there could be a separation of duties if you like between the running of a school and the teaching in the classroom. If we discuss this distinction I cannot hold out much hope for it because it seems to me that in our present system we have an over powerful administration and an undervalued professional corps.

C: Can we separate the two? The division of labour was Adam Smith's revolution in the work place. It certainly heralded the production line in our factories. If you do one job and do it well and someone else does another then the end product should be better. Isn't that what is done by allocating different subjects to different teachers. An expert in their own field?

P: I don't think I shall enjoy this discussion one bit. I cannot parallel the teaching of diverse subjects to diverse children with the putting together of an automobile on a rolling line.

C: It is not parallel but it may prove a useful means of getting this argument on its way.

The new lean practices are geared towards creating an understanding of the product amongst the workforce. Giving power to those who are making parts to improve or organise in a way that might be better. It is appreciated that those who are actually working the machines are in the best position to make adjustments or changes. So like teachers they are empowered by their experience and practice to contribute in much greater ways than has ever before been allowed or even thought relevant.

P: I know people who still run their plant as if it were a Victorian establishment. "I make the decisions" "I take the responsibility." "They will do it my way, or else!" And this sounds very like what I am hearing teachers say about the present status in education.

C: that's not fair. We all know such people and we all know teachers that are less well qualified than they ought to be, and less able and less motivated. In fact they shouldn't be doing the job at all, just like the manager you quote.

P: Now this sort of authoritarian manager is often thought of very highly and gets a good salary because he is in a structure that supports that style of management. My fear is that we are going to get teachers who respond to this style of management by endorsing it and becoming like it in their teaching. It is there in some schools I know.

C: that is the old style of management practices that are gradually being replaced by successful companies with practices that appreciate that each person has a value, each person is part of the team and everyone can work together for the profit of the company and all can benefit by it.

P: OK. So we are all working as a team and getting the best for our children?

C: That doesn't seem to be contradictory to me.

P: We didn't need business to show us that. Perhaps it was education that inspired business with this new trend?

C: I have no doubt that it is because we have highly educated people running businesses and their schooling had some influence on their thinking. If our business as teachers is to support the development of individuals, show them the world, and give them the confidence to do something about it, then we have succeeded if our captains of industry as they called, are reflective and innovative and sensitive to people as well as to profit.

P: I like that. We have proved our excellence by the leaders we have produced. Well if that is true why are we changing the style of education that brought forth this style of leaders?

C: It isn't that simple, as you well know. It is a very complicated interplay of conserving the best of what we have and risking the new unknown ideas which might prove better, more challenging, more exciting.

P: I accept all that about education. It has to change and evolve. I do see it as a living organism not an inorganic institution. I recognise the merits of business practices and increased productivity and employee participation but I do not perceive the link with education other than as a partially useful metaphor.

C: If you will not see it we have no need to discuss it further.

P: Don't shut up shop just as we are getting to the point. I cannot see how the language of business, the language of production, helps us to grasp anything about the essential nature of education.

C: but there is exactly where we can agree. The nature of education, the whole concept

of learning and schooling cannot be put into the business suit.

P: How apt! Except it wouldn't be a suit but a straightjacket.

C: It would be restrictive that is for sure. But when we are discussing our schools and how they are run we are not discussing the nature of education.

P: So you see a distinction? I am not so sure. The form of the structure is bound to influence the content. If I think of the school as a box then things will fit in according to the shape. If it were in a cylinder it would be different. I might put the same things in each, but they would not fit very well.

C: What a strange concept that is. A school is a box!

P: I agree it is not good but it was just an idea trying to think why and how the structure influences the contents. There may be ways we appreciate and some unknown unconscious influences.

C: What are you talking about?

P: I suppose I am thinking more of the language which seems to constrain me in a box. Some ideas fit well and it is all neat and tidy. But in reality it isn't at all like that. If you restrict talking about teaching to lessons plans, targets, outcomes and results we are putting teaching into a set of words that it is difficult to contradict. I felt so often that I didn't like things but if I had no words never mind a voice, how could I argue? Because teaching is a whole lot more than this and that whole lot more cannot easily be described or agreed upon it can get swept under the carpet like all the fluff we mentioned before. The really difficult parts, the really interesting parts are conveniently precluded when the language doesn't provide the words. Once we try to put our thoughts into language the whole debate opens up again. And that is exactly how it should be.

C: This isn't helping us decide on the possibility of separation.

P: I think it is. I am saying that we can separate parts out and examine them minutely and put them back together again and know more and understand more. It is useful to look at administrative practices and see if we can do them more efficiently or effectively. We can and should be striving to improve in all areas. But what we cannot do is do that for all the parts of schooling and certainly not for the whole of education. We cannot inspect or examine in a scientific manner all those things that are important.

C: But the things we can inspect and examine then we should.

P: I have no objection to that. What I think irritates me is that in creating a system that is accountable, a system has been created that leaves out something important..

C: If we have accountability we have responsibility and we have methods of checking up we have quality assurance and we have

P: All the appendages that go with that part of accountability. Nothing more. How could we evaluate the success of creating the environment that we discussed where moments of discovery, epiphanies of learning can happen? No one, thank goodness is accountable for how many children or teachers have made discoveries or had an epiphany. Nor should they be. Nor could they be. It may sound contradictory but teachers may never know when they have been the catalyst for such an event, but when such a thing happens for a child or a teacher these moments are the sparks of the firework that sets off further fireworks and not the sparks amidst the thousands that are gone in a flash.

DIALOGUE 3

Is childhood different from preparation for adulthood?

C: my problem is that children are not children anymore. They are expected to be mini adults.

P: that seems to me to be an idea that went out of fashion with the Victorians.

C: it should have done. We are supposed to be enlightened about how different the child's world is to ours. But when you get to grips with the requirements of the curriculum you just know there is no time for being children anymore.

P: Surely that is up to you in your classroom? How you treat the children and how you teach them.....

C: I know all that and I do all that and I try to make time for all the enjoyable times too. But it is becoming increasingly impossible.

P: You know very well how to teach young children. You have the requisite knowledge and skills to motivate them, to present exciting lessons and to get them working on their own. What more do you think you need.

C: I need time. It is a subject we keep skirting around in our conversations and I think we need to discuss it now.

P: I too want to discuss time. It is something that everyone I talk to has some complaint about. It will be very interesting when we get to it. But I am going to be quite adamant about this. There are a number of issues we need to talk about before we get embroiled in that one. We do need to discuss this all-important business of being a child at school.

C: OK I cede to your request but I think much of what I have to say about being a child has to do with time.

P: I am sure it does and it will help us on the way.

C: simply put I do not have time to get all that I am required to do with the children to allow them any time to be themselves.

P: they are themselves when they are pupils in your class. You know them individually and they are getting as good as any child can get in school.

C: I hope they are getting as good as they can. I try very hard to give it all I have. That is not what I mean. I cannot give them time to play, to learn through their play, to dream and wonder, to bring in to me their precious treasures so that we can talk about them.

P: You are waxing quite lyrical and that will get you nowhere. Your opponents would say you are being sentimental and rather foolish. Children are in school to be learning and it is supposed to be hard work and it is not playtime all day long. Remember those newspaper articles about 'all my child learned this week at school was how to use a corn flakes box as a truck.' There were good teachers but there was a lot of wasted time.

C: See! You are talking about time now. How do we know what is wasted time anyway? I just think that as a child you need time to be nothing more than a child. Enjoying playing your own games with your friends, devising games, playing houses, looking for adventures finding things and imagining stories. Blowing bubbles not for the science of surface tension and prismatic colours but for sheer joy.

P: There are children who love finding out about the science as well as the sheer joy.

C: I know that but what I am saying is that every part of every day is given over to lessons and there are no spaces for me to interact as another joyful human being rather than as their teacher. It is too much like a high-powered course in speed-reading. I feel I am instructing rather than teaching. Children can only take so much instruction at a time.

P: Now I think you have a valid point here. I see a big difference between teaching and instruction.

C: In teaching we are supposed to have our own ideas about what we are interested in and how we can get the children to participate. How to open up their interests and talents and how to probe a bit deeper with this one but be content to let it go with another. We are teaching when we are responding to the children and their needs as we see them. We are teaching when we are responding with all we have to bring to the project or situation or whatever. We are free to go down the path that may be the path that child needs to go right now. We all know there are those moments when something clicks, when something is sparked off. Teachers are obligated by their profession to go there. That's how I feel.

P: I couldn't agree more. You have put into words what many of us have been trying to say. Teaching is responding. It is using your knowledge and skills and professional judgement to make a choice about which way to go, how to answer a question, where to direct a child for information and who to enlist to help and so on.

C: But this is so different from the way I feel I have to respond to required lessons and lessons plans.

P: The idea was that we should be able to incorporate both a set curriculum and for teachers to use their own skills in getting it across to their pupils.

C: But that is based entirely on the idea that there is a body of knowledge out there, that is the same for everyone, and that all children should know x, y and z by the time they are x years old.

P: Our school system is based on the transmission model that is true.

C: Well what I am saying is that this model is at odds with teaching as I understand it and mainly because it doesn't recognise that children are not mini adults.

P: Make the connection for me.

C: It is like the speed-reading course. You know exactly what you are going to get before you start, you pay your money and you expect to get to standard whatever in two weeks time or you'll demand your money back. It is an instructional arrangement. This is how I see our present educational system running. As an instructional rather than an educational establishment.

P: you are sounding very didactic if not pedantic! Instruction is surely a part of education and certainly an important part of schooling.

C: Exactly! An important *part* of education. It isn't all that there is to it. For children, at an early age particularly there are other aspects of education other than instruction where interplay of ideas and social interaction need space and time both in school and outside of school. I know, I know you are going to say that that can happen at home and at the weekends with their families, and I will say, 'well lucky them *if* they get it then' but that doesn't invalidate my point which is that I need it to happen in *my* classrooms so

that I can assist in their overall education. As a teacher I feel and respond to the whole child not that bit of it that responds to instruction.

P: well said! I am heartily glad that you are a teacher. You have all the right feelings and arguments from my book. Now, why can you not respond as the teacher you are? What is it that holds you back or prevents you from probing and extending or letting things go? What is it that prevents your professional judgement from being exercised?

C: The damned time. We have to get through this amount of work in this amount of time and we have to assess all the time, which we would do anyway but now this all has to be recorded, and we have to assess how far they are behind requirements for the tests. The tests are the overriding judgement, not the teacher. Do you know that in the first year there are 'catch-up' programmes? Five year olds being in catch up programmes.

P: Isn't this a way of helping them be at ease with their peers in school?

C: You are so polite. What do you think it does to any of us, never mind a five-year-old, to be told you are a failure before you even start?

P: I know that feeling. It reminds me of when I was at University. In the first year Anglo-Saxon course there were a lot of students who had not studied Latin and were finding the grammar discussions rather difficult. The professor organised a 'remedial' class for non-Latin students. The best of intentions but a disastrous effect. Attendance at these lectures was obligatory as part of the English degree so students attended but they took little interest and marginally passed with the help of a few well informed friends. Most ended up with a deep hatred of our wonderful language, which I know, still remains for those with whom I have kept in touch.

C: You see the vital role of the teacher and the awesome consequences of statutory requirements! Our five-year-olds cannot articulate these feelings but I feel for them and hate to see them doing extra reading or maths when their peers are painting or singing. It is a tunnel vision view of education and it affects our very youngest the most.

P: It is a peculiarly restricted view of education I grant you. And I think you are right to throw up the difference between instruction and education as a whole. But I still think that school is the place for instruction.

C: Of course it is. And you know I am not saying otherwise. There are times when instruction is of paramount importance. When I am explaining the fire drill I want the children to do exactly as they told when they hear that whistle. I instruct them in what they need to know and how they need to behave. And most teachers because it is their nature to do so, will explain carefully why it is so important and why this is not a time to question or deviate. OK this is a treating child like mini-adults. If we want them to survive to adulthood there are some things that have to be done this way. That is *not* the whole story is it?

P: No it is not. I like your example of instruction because it is not frivolous or even controversial. It is a solid example. So are we saying that instruction is for mini-adults but not usually the best way to teach our younger children? Is that where we have got to?

C: I wouldn't have a problem agreeing with that.

P: So what do we want to give children?

C: teaching. Instruction seems to me to be about having this set of skills and a stock of knowledge which I impart to my students and then test them to see if they have got it.

Like speed reading or going on a skiing course. I know what I want before I get there, I know roughly what it is going to be about and what it will be like, and then after the course I should be able to know it, understand it or do it.

P: And all the while this doesn't affect your whole education? Your whole self? Just that part of you that is adult and learns from instruction?

C: Now you are being mischievous. Everything we learn affects the whole of us. We are not compartmentalised. But there are appropriate parts, spaces and above all times for different aspects of education. Instruction to my mind is quite clearly necessary even for very young children, but it is not the optimum way to engage in the realisation of the full potential of any individual. There is far more to learning than the transmission model and far more to teaching than instruction.

P: I had a difficult time in Texas with this very notion. All teaching time was called instructional time. I certainly don't think that is the case. All teaching time has the potential for being learning time and we are not always aware of what learning is going on. The set lesson is decidedly not all that is being learned.

C: this totality which we can never name or claim is the very core of the argument. It sounds such a truism to talk about the whole child, (as if there were any other way of thinking of an individual), but it is the holistic approach, to use a new age expression, that we are unable to attend to because we are so preoccupied with all the parts all the bits of the curriculum.

P: there would be many who would claim that little children can't take in the big picture because of lack of experience and maturity and the only way to teach them is in little bits.

C: But you know better. You know there are children who learn in different ways and for many children in my experience seeing the big picture, knowing where we are going, understanding the rationale is all part of how they can take on board very complex and complicated ideas.

P: what for example?

C: take science for instance. I can tell you of schools that got excellent SAT's scores and if you asked the children about the concepts involved they could not answer. They have learned a vocabulary and to some extent how to manipulate it in the tests. There was no real understanding of experimentation for instance or what constitutes a good experiment? In our school we did very badly because we would not follow the trend. We feel vindicated by our pupil's scientific work but we have a hard time explaining that to Ofsted.

P: You have just told me how you have superseded the mandates by using your own professional judgement. Have you still got your job?

C: It wasn't that bad. But it meant that our school has a very poor grading in science whereas we know we have given our pupils a better education in this respect.

P: Is this treating kids as kids or as mini adults?

C: Strangely enough this is treating them or granting them a greater degree of maturity than the science curriculum allowed for. But it is an interesting inconsistency, if that is the right word, allowing children time to be children often means they learn a lot more and make faster progress even in standardised tests. It is all about response and interaction. If we as teachers are under pressure to get "everything fitted in," we do not

have the luxury, which I think is a necessity, to allow for different responses and different interactions. And worse than that I have to find ways of getting them up to scratch for the tests even if it means teaching them tricks.

P: I understand that notion very well, specifically in maths where the process is not understood. You end up teaching a method like in the division of fractions you turn the fraction upside down and multiply.

C: There might come a point at 16 years of age when that method may be legitimate but I think it is cheating the children if we short-change them with tricks.

P: Is this treating them like adults?

C: I suppose so because we are admitting that there is no other way and we have run out of time so hey, just do it like this because you have got to live in the world. But we should not be incorporating this policy into the education of our youngest children. We have only just started.

P: so it's not just that the curriculum does not respect children it is also the tests that steal away their childhood?

C: Now who is waxing lyrical?

P: Well is it? Is forcing children to learn in this way or that an encroachment into their childhood? Is going to school a denial of childlike and child appropriate lifestyle? What is it that we are saying about treating them as mini adults?

C: It comes down to this. That school is an unnatural place for children in many respects, but it is the law and we generally think it is for their benefit. We have advanced in our understanding of children and their development so why do we not include a curriculum and a style of teaching that we know is child appropriate.

P: Are we heading for the child centred rather than content centred argument here?

C: Why not?

P: Well I don't see it as a divisive choice. I think both are part of what we should be doing in our schools.

C: Both yes, but not one at the expense of the other. I think that because the curriculum is such a big issue, and rightly so for the most part, then the pendulum has swung towards getting the curriculum strictly set out for us all. What we have got out of kilter is consideration for the child.

P: We can hope that the pendulum will swing back can't we?

C: We can. I think of it more like a cycle or a spiral and I hope we are beginning to see that change in the next cycle or spiral when we are revisiting the curriculum and the evaluation of children and schools in a much more enlightened way. If I am optimistic, then there will be a better time ahead.

DIALOGUE 4

How do we balance long and short term goals?

P: Should we be more interested in short term or long-term goals?

C: It depends who you are talking to.

P: so it is personal perspective that informs this debate?

C: It is always personal perspective whether we acknowledge it or not. But this particular question is very much dependent on your point of view.

P: and which is in the best interests of our children?

C: that phrase has caused more problems than it has solved. I have read of a parent killing their child because it was in the best interests of the child. Let's leave that thorny phrase till another time. Let's ask instead whether it is in the best interests of education.

P: Well that's simple then. The long-term interest is by far the most important since we have agreed that education is a life-long process.

C: Yes, I agree but in that life-long process there are stages along the way and it is sometimes necessary to focus on this stage rather than always be anticipating what is coming next.

P: I really hate it when the whole of a year's work or the entire primary curriculum is called a preparation for secondary and that is a preparation for life and so on ad nauseam.

It does become a *reductio ad absurdum* because the whole of life is always a preparation for something else. Finally are we prepared for death?

C: How morbid a view of life is that? Preparation is absolutely necessary and there are recognisable stages which we do well to work towards. As a parent I want my child to get the qualification that is going to help with getting a job. So if I am a parent I certainly am interested in the short term, if you can call 13 years at school a short term.

P: Point made. But it doesn't mean that the short-term goals are in the best interests of anyone's education just because some people want it and it serves a useful purpose.

C: interesting phrases those. Some people want it and it serves a useful purpose. It could describe education couldn't it? Only some people see the value of it and they have a huge variety of reasons for wanting it, and we would probably agree that whatever it is that we think education is it does serve a useful purpose.

P: I would hate to see education reduced to these terms. They are only part of the concept that we are discussing and that particular part cannot substitute for the whole.

C: but it does contribute to the whole.

P: Is this helping us in our endeavour to solve the short term or long-term argument?

C: It will be a very short argument if we agree that the short-term goals are all there is to education. We know better than to argue that case. What we are interested in is the education that goes on in our schools. And that in itself is only a part of the whole picture. So I begin to feel that in schools it is quite proper to be interested in short term goals.

P: It may be proper because that is the way we have become conditioned into seeing it.

Our educational system will bring us to this view of schools. Especially now that we have such a quantifiable method of accountability we will tend to understand it in terms of numbers and results and successes which are more readily measurable than the long-term effects, or the ongoing progress.

C: Are you saying that the tail is wagging the dog?

P: I think I am. If we get into the habit of thinking this is the way to do things then this is simply the way we do things. Unless we make a determined effort to see things differently or at least to reflect on the status quo, we cannot think outside the box that we find ourselves in.

C: What a bunch of mixed metaphors you use. All very interesting too. You are giving me a picture of schools that are blindly following someone else's rules, churning out results and thinking of themselves rather than their pupils. Like the business that profits from its workers without proper compensation, the school is not concerned with workers welfare but solely with the end product.

P: What a mixed metaphor you are using! How dare you accuse me of mixing things when you are dragging the business metaphor bang into the middle of the discussion?

C: OK. It is now in the open. We are not only examining whether sort term goals are rightly to be considered education we are delving deeper into whether the present set up indoctrinates us with the idea that this is precisely what schools should be about.

P: You used the word business and now you have used the word indoctrinate. Both of them are words and concepts that concern me deeply in this question of education. Let me say at this point that I have real worries that in thinking of short term only, and looking more and more for ways of making schools accountable in a businesslike manner, that we have lost sight of the distant horizon. We are too busy looking at our feet to make sure we don't trip up that we haven't the time to smell the roses so to speak on the journey to the distant horizon.

C: Smelling the roses, distant horizons, watching our every step. I see clearly that you think of education as a journey that is filled with romantic ideas of flower lined paths and tropical sunsets. Come on! We live in the 21st century and we need to get our children through school and qualified for work.

P: well if I have my head in the clouds, you certainly have your feet stuck in the mud.

C: I have my feet firmly planted on the hard ground of experience. These children need to know certain things, they need to understand that they have to learn within a time period, they have tests and they reap the rewards of working hard by getting a good job.

P: You wish! I could start another digression here all about getting a job and the stupefying boredom of being unemployed with an honours degree. But that will have to be another time. For now I want to keep to this point. You want to concentrate on where you are putting your feet every step of the way, whereas I want to see the whole landscape as I travel.

C: You are deliberately twisting what I am saying. I think each stage is important. A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step?

P: But such a journey wouldn't begin if we didn't have long-term goals. And before you say it I know you have to think of each part of the journey and plan where you are stopping and eating and all the other necessary considerations.

C: Well there you are! We are having to make necessary arrangements for the stages

along the route. Schools should be the places where our children get all the help they need to start them on the academic path. And then mark out the stages and help them and so on. It is a continuous process.

P: I think it is you who is daydreaming now. You tell it all as if it were that easy when you know how impossibly difficult all that is. Yes! I know we are speaking of the big picture and we need to have grand ideas and we need our ideals too. But you are not convincing me that concentrating on the stages is anything more than a necessary administrative procedure. It is not what education is supposed to be about.

C: Look you have got to see that each tiny spark each little discovery is the means of firing our own learning. We know that to be so. They are perhaps very small items if we listed them but we know that they are the very moments that enable us, in fact they empower us, to learn beyond where we are at any moment.

P: We agree on that most certainly. Those events are like the electrical switches that connect to the energy that fuels the progress in our learning. They are the instances that we are going to discuss when we talk about a quality education. But I do not see these vital incidents as stages. The very point of these instances is that they occur totally individually at times even unconnected to the event or the explanation that occasioned the epiphany. They may be stages in an individual's development but there is no way they can be called stages which are concurrent according to one's age or stage in school.

C: All that schools are trying to do is to provide what might be called appropriate experiences for each age. Introducing aspects of our literature and history and so on that professionals have thought long and hard about. This system has not sprung up overnight and has had many revisions. It is not a closed shop.

P: Even if it were true that it is appropriate, which I doubt for many reasons, the very fact that the stages are laid down so rigidly gives so little space for teachers to interpret according to individual need. The race is for each hurdle and finally to finish the race. I do not want to see education as a race and we have agreed there is no finish.

C: I gather then that your objection is to the lack of individualisation in these short-term goals.

P: It is. It's like Henry Ford saying you can have any colour car as long as it is black. It is a contradiction. But it is also the only way you are going to get an affordable car. Mass production is not a metaphor for education, it is the literal truth. Teachers have to teach the National curriculum and they have to prepare children for the SAT's and they are themselves subjected to inspections that require adherence to a set of principles that are short-term rather than long term related goals. Teachers cannot make time for the examination of some project or artefact because there are so many other necessary things to do. This may be one of those times when discovery really occurs and she has to say no! The times when she says, I'm doing this because I really believe this is the right thing to be doing right now, even though I know I should be doing x, y, or z, she pays for it in so many ways that eventually she is worn down by the effort or caves in taking the line of least resistance. In a few instances that I could tell you about they have left the profession. (Exactly what would have happened if one of Ford's workers had painted the car yellow? He would be sacked.) This can only be called sacrificing the long-term goals for the short-term goals in education. Who is benefiting? Not the children, not the teachers, not the profession and so on into society as a whole. It is a

really important issue that we cannot set aside any longer.

C: But it is only your perception that sees it as short term. In order to effectively enable children to take advantage of higher education, better prospects for jobs and life style is the reason that these rigorous standards have been laid down. Focusing in on the very important early stages of education is for the benefit in the long run.

P: You know that this idea is very important to me. Of course the early years are the most important in many ways. What we count as important for them is what is dividing our argument. If you were convincing enough why are so many teachers disillusioned? None of us is scared off by discipline nor hard work. It has got to be because our ideals are being compromised.

C: It is a different way of interpreting what is important. It is considered important to have a stock of knowledge by a certain age. To have been exposed to certain experiences is the more appealing language. Putting it into practice within the framework of tests and inspections is simply making sure that children are getting what is considered to be a minimum education.

P: Well there is exactly where we are never going to agree. I cannot believe that setting aside the teacher's professional judgement, her moral conscience about such matters, is serving our children better. At best it is a relegation of professional teachers to the status of teacher-technicians and at worst it smacks of dictatorship. Technicians need to get this job done at this time and in this manner. Teachers are supposed to use their judgement about appropriate time, pace and materials. This is at the crux of our debate about goals in education.

C: The curriculum is laid down I grant you, but the manner of delivery is not.

P: There you go again. Delivery! Is it bread or milk or coal that we are concerned with? Why are lessons not *given* any longer, why are they not taught or learned? That they are delivered suggests a package deal, which is parcelled up, and ready to go before any consideration of who is giving it or who is receiving it and it conspires to re-educate our thinking by changing the language we use. The words we use are both influenced by how we think and in turn influence how we think. Children or education never used to be products either. They were never customers nor were their parents. All these new ideas which some of my friends think have merit, are so presented that there becomes no other language to talk about education unless you use them. This is what I meant when I said we are conditioned by the system itself.

C: Language is alive and well. It is changing and will always do so, so long as it is a living language. You are hankering after the good old days again.

P: On the contrary I am hankering over a bit of discipline in our use of language.

C: Are we setting up an Academie Anglaise to deal with problem like the French do?

P: It is the French, in the form of Lyotard that has had a great deal to say on this very question. He writes so eloquently about language excluding people so that their voices cannot be heard. I felt that my voice could not be heard when I was a teacher.

C: There are very many very talented and highly professional people who have put together the reforms of the last 10-15 years. Your voice is of a teacher who doesn't like change and resists the discipline of accountability. Teachers have got away with it for too long and they need to be accountable. Taking things in short simple steps and evaluating at every stage seems to me to be an admirable way of sorting out the problem

of state education.

P: Now you show your true colours. We teachers are in need of a bit of businesslike shaping up and if it means following some well-trod path that business has benefited by then why not try it. It has revolutionised the way business is done; it could do the same for schools.

C: Not exactly but not far off. Business thinking has inspired a great deal of the images, words and proposals. People have got really hooked up on TQM and the like and I think it is one of those occasions that have been beneficial. The cross fertilisation of ideas you have often said is where the greatest leaps forward occur.

P: But it is not reasonable to make the farmer work in haute couture outfits nor the company executive to wear swimwear. Cross fertilisation of ideas works when both benefit like the orthopaedic surgeon and the mechanical engineer working together when designing a replacement joint for the human body. Education and business do not have the same goal in mind. I can see that there are areas where each can benefit from the other but the end goal is what we are talking about. And no matter what language you use, the goal of business is to make a profit and the goal of education is about hundreds of different things that no one can agree on, but none of them should be about making a profit.

C: Business also needs to satisfy the customer. And we are trying to get the student what they need, the parent what they need out of education in order perhaps to work and make a profit for themselves.

P: Oh! Well said! You have used the words cleverly to deceive even yourself. Of course education will enable people to get work or better jobs and thus earn money. We hope that education is also for self-improvement, self-realisation, self-discipline and serving others too. The goal is for individuals to fulfil themselves, to love learning and to be open to new ideas so that we can live harmoniously together. None of the great ideals of education are to do with monetary profit. Wouldn't teachers be paid a handsome salary if we really prized education? Schools are not businesses and thinking of them as such hinders our best thinking about what we should be doing in them.

DIALOGUE 5

What does quality in education mean?

P: So after all this discussion are we any nearer to knowing what we mean by quality in education?

C: It is something that is very difficult to define. But that doesn't prevent us from knowing it when we see it.

P: And is what you see as quality in education the same as what I see?

C: I can't answer that question, but I do know a good school when I am in one. And I will not be put down with comments like "gut reaction" or personal opinion!

P: I agree there is a place for gut reaction along with other more objective forms of information.

C: And as for those who criticise us by saying that this is personal preference I would answer, "Yes! It is!" I am entitled to have an opinion on what a good school is or is not after a lifetime of teaching and studying education.

P: That's all very well but does a good school necessarily provide a high quality education? That is what we are after.

C: Let's get the terms straight to start with. Quality in ordinary language generally means high quality doesn't it?

P: As in this is a quality piece of work; this is quality craftsmanship and so on. I agree, those instances are an abbreviation of high quality. We can have poor quality, inferior quality and I suppose mediocre quality, but we usually qualify it if it not high quality.

C: So quality on its own implies high quality. Something good, above the norm, worthwhile.

P: I think that is how we would ordinarily perceive its usage. The trouble is that this is another of those words that has been lifted directly from the manufacturing and business worlds where it has a quite distinct and decidedly different meaning.

C: As in quality standards and quality assurance.

P: Exactly! Here we are with those words in our educational literature as if they naturally belong there.

C: Now we have had this discussion before. Language has got to be alive to new uses...

P: ...and abuses.

C: But we have to accommodate language to the growth of understanding.

P: ...and our thinking will be circumscribed by language. Remember that too, our use or abuse of words changes concepts. Rightly so, as you have said before, advances in understanding refine concepts. But my point is that if our knowledge is written or spoken in certain words those are the words that influence the thinking. Can you imagine how hard it was to think of the earth as *not* flat, when that concept first emerged?? To imagine that the earth was *not* the centre of the universe? It involves a whole paradigm shift to incorporate new ideas, new theories. If education is subject to this sort of paradigm shift because a new theory has displaced the old one then yes we have to expand our language to accommodate such thinking.

C: Do you think we have a new theory of education?

P: No. There has never been a theory of education as such anyway. There are many theories and there are the essentially contested concepts of all time one of which is education. The shift that we are being forced to make is about a new theory of quality. That is what this whole debate of mine is based upon.

C: I have never heard of a theory of quality. Are you sure you know what you are talking about?

P: There isn't a theory of quality as such either because that is to a lesser degree it is still a hotly disputed topic also. Excellence in education, a quality education and other such phrases have been with us since Socrates and have been debated just as much as the purpose or use of education. My contention is that quality has always meant something above the standard whatever else it may have meant. That is one commonality in all its uses. Now there has been a gradual slide into a way of thinking about quality that has infiltrated into education via our state schools that equates quality with a pre-determined standard.

C: You are sounding very radical. Dictatorships and infiltration whatever next?

P: The language of the business ethic, which has proved so successful in that field, is the language that has been thrust upon educators with the instruction, "Make it fit." And that is a good metaphor to use because I think of the primary curriculum as an individually tailored garment whereas the state wants us to have an off-the-peg one –size- fits -all model. Despite what was written in the recent Review of Primary Schools.²

C: But differentiation is a big issue isn't it – recognising that all children are different and have different needs – different learning styles? Doesn't an open investigative, approach only meet the needs of some children?

P: I know all about the research that has shown how this approach favours middle class children. I think it is inconclusive. What it does show is that it is a particular style, which is suited to a certain learning style rather than appropriate to a certain class of children. It is a style that good teachers use along many other styles. Use of any method or style exclusively is definitely not going to reach all children. So I would argue that the lecture style that is a matter of necessity now rather than a choice of style is definitely not reaching every child.

C: The NC and the frameworks provide entitlement for all children. Isn't this a good thing? Does entitlement necessarily mean the erosion of individualism? The child's or the teacher's?

P: Of course entitlement is a good thing but it does erode the individualism of both the child and the teacher. It may be very liberating for some to know what you are going to get before you get it, but for many teachers and I contend, for all children quality education entails going beyond what is prescribed.

C: Are you saying that a teacher has the right to impose her individual interpretation of education on the child?

P: Yes! I am! Why should the state be the only one to have the right to do so and believe it is in the best interests of everyone concerned? I am not arguing from an untutored mind in these matters. Just as the state claims to have the best evidence in matters of the

² A Review of Primary Schools 1994-1998

curriculum I claim to have the best evidence on how to teach this particular class of children at this particular time.

C: So you are imposing your interpretation of education on the children?

P: And what else should a teacher be doing? I teach because I believe in what I am doing, not just because I have been trained to do a certain technical type of job. I also happen to believe that a quality education will encourage thinking and questioning and trying out alternatives both by children and teachers. This brings me back to that metaphor about one-size-fits-all. It goes a long way to help me clarify my thoughts because for most 7 year olds the size will be approximately the same, it will be comfortable and easy to wear and will certainly be functional and have many such similar characteristics, but it will not be a school uniform where the colour and the style and the length of the skirt or the trouser leg are the major issues.³

C: you are getting quite carried away with this idea. We are simply re-visiting individualism versus instrumentalism again aren't we?

P: We are. We are because it is so important. Quality in education is always going to have some sort of basis that most people agree on. Not so long ago it used to mean speaking languages, having read widely, understanding rudimentary science and having travelled round Europe or the world if you were wealthy enough. Today most people would agree that a quality education means a high level of literacy, numeracy and computer skills along with a general knowledge of the world, its science, history and geography and so on, and a specialism in which you have graduated from a university. It also implies that you are a continual learner. I would say that it always has meant that. A continual learner, one who is highly educated is also one who is still learning. Wouldn't you agree?

C: I certainly would though I think many highly educated people have become arch criminals too.

P: Oh I acknowledge all the possibilities are there but just for the sake of this argument lets think of our ideal. After all that is what quality is all about: the ideal. In my ideal, education has opened an individual up to new ideas. It has shown the many new things there are to learn, to experience in a huge variety of ways. It has given me the world never mind an oyster. Education is not just the learning that would go on anyway even if we were left in the dark; it is truly about enlightenment.

C: Is this some mystical form of enlightenment?

P: Not one bit. Though I have no doubt that mystical or spiritual enlightenment will prove to be extremely important in another argument. I am referring here to the sort of understanding that one compares to a light being turned on or clarity of vision after being in the darkness metaphorically and literally. You see the metaphors of education so easily used by all of us are there because they are relevant and help explain these difficult ideas. (Even the business metaphor itself has some value) The light is shone for us by virtue of experience or a teacher (anyone that is, not just teachers as in schools). The natural curiosity of the human mind combined with either enough support from others because of lack of confidence, or one's own insatiable desire to see things for

³ Perhaps this is another reason why so many schools gladly accept uniform and even claim that it has beneficial effects on the children's behaviour.

oneself, to go where no one has been before, to find out even if it is a bit scary, to know for certain (as far as we can know such a thing) will take us away from the darkness into the light. I know, I know it might be refracted light and it might be all delusion and it might end up in a cave, as opposed to having started there. And it might all be proved wrong eventually but Oh! The joy of finding out something! Those moments that Hogan calls epiphanies they are what the excitement is all about.

C: Can I interrupt? You seem to be off in a reverie somewhere! Can we keep our feet firmly on the ground please and get this discussion back on track.

P: back on track indeed. The paths themselves can take us off course, and they can be the very ones that lead somewhere really new and exciting.

C: We cannot have a whole system of education for the masses of people posited on the framework of going off on different paths of unlimited excitement. I don't think the ministry of education would see it quite like that.

P: Well they should! Because that is the way I think of education.

C: But isn't one of the purposes of education to lead or to guide? Don't we as more experienced and knowledgeable adults have a responsibility to discriminate between what is more or less valuable or important? What about the argument that children don't know what they don't know? How can they make choices when they are not aware of what is available to them? What about children who given choices would not venture beyond their cultural boundaries or investigate much beyond their known world? Who is to say that unlimited excitement is harmful and could lead to bigotry and prejudice?

P: but that is exactly what I am saying. Of course it is our responsibility as teachers to lead and guide particularly about which values we endorse and why. It is the present regime that inhibits us. Children who will not venture beyond their known worlds are more likely to be nurtured by a regime that implies "pass the tests and you are OK" And I and many of my colleagues believe that it is more likely that bigotry and prejudice will result from an authority that gives no space for the exercise of professional judgement. I would give teachers the greater power and not the state.

C: So you are a dictator too. Even if your power is limited you are still a dictator.

P: How could you accuse me of such a thing! I am no more a dictator than you are. What you have forgotten in this equation is that one of the most important traits of our highly educated person, the one who has benefited by a high quality education, is that she can think for herself. It is that simple and that stark.

C: And don't you think that that is where we are aiming with all the new initiatives and all the new inspections and tests?

P: I wish it were so. This is where the contradiction lies and it is where I am beginning to find the basis of a new theory of quality. We have to reconcile what we think is important in terms of curriculum edicts but we have to always be mindful of the purpose of that curriculum. It is not to *produce* an individual (certainly not a standard x year old) with this, this and this knowledge complete, tested and stamped with the quality assurance seal of approval, the whole purpose of the curriculum is to be a vehicle for understanding what is known at present and to be able to allow us to use that vehicle to take another journey as yet uncharted.

C: Oh! You are off again. On your travels of delight! We are not all going to go off exploring distant planets and creating new life and solving all the problems of the

universe are we? Don't we also have a responsibility to show children what they understand and don't understand? Doesn't a society like ours need to know something of a child's abilities? As long as we have selection into higher education and as long as employers seek benchmarks don't educationalists have a responsibility both to society and to individuals to ensure that children are assessed accurately and according to criteria consistently applied?

P: Yes! Yes! And Yes! To all of that. But don't you see that is exactly what a standard means. Setting, raising, improving standards is what it is all about. It is about making things the same: standardising. You understand that standards needs to be raised, you understand that standards are about improving education for all but you also want to say that standard is excellent and that is where I have a problem.

C: Come on! We are not talking about everybody pursuing a Ph.D. in philosophy.

P: Don't be so dismissive of those whose desire is so electrifying. Besides, you quite spoil my enthusiasm.

C: Well, it is sometimes your enthusiasm that spoils your arguments. Let's be practical. What is it about your theory of quality that is different from what we have at present?

P: If we see the purpose of education to free people from darkness or despair, to enlighten them, (and I know that will change from era to era and society to society) to encourage thinking for yourself (and again I know that thinking skills have a slot in the curriculum) through a rigorous curriculum that reveals how little we know as well as how much, if we show our children that doubting and questioning is the hallmark of our human nature and it is not to be subjugated by obedience and acceptance to no-matter-whom, (and that opens up a real can of worms doesn't it?) how can we think that a prescribed curriculum that allows no time for teachers to exercise their professional judgement, never mind the time for children to go beyond the given curriculum in their own way, can meet our requirements for a high quality education? We cannot.

C: I have never seen you so animated. And I must say you have articulated your reasons very clearly. If you believe what you have stated to be the purpose of education your conclusion might be sound.

P: I believe it is.

DIALOGUE 6 In text

How does time affect the intrinsic aims of education?

DIALOGUE 7

What role does the concept of care play?

C: So what is it about the concept of care that you are so worried about?

P: I hear a lot of comments like, 'I wish I didn't care so much,' 'she's all right she doesn't care,' 'If only their parents really cared,' 'It's all work and no caring that's the problem.'

C: Pretty usual stuff that coming from teachers.

P: But it is coming from all different levels of education from all those concerned and most people talking about any aspect of society. People don't seem to care enough.

C: Well I am not going to argue about that one because it isn't about education nor is it philosophy.

P: Well that's where you are wrong. What happens when we don't care? When we care about the wrong things? We lose our sense of values. It is all to do with the value we place on things. If we care about education it is because we value it. If we care about philosophy it is because we value it. We care for our spouses, our children, our parents, and our pets our homes our community, our environment...

C: OK, OK I get your point. So we do care about these things for many reasons and I have to agree I care about certain things because I really value them.

P: Exactly! You care about the freedom to choose how you are going to teach your 7-year-olds and you get very angry when you feel that because of other requirements that you cannot do that. It isn't because you are rebelling against regulations; it is because you feel you know best. When you said you spent the first few weeks of the new school year "doing your own thing" and that it cost you dearly in terms of your inspection later on, you were telling me that you cared enough about what you think is important to do it despite the consequences. An excellent example of the concept of care.

C: I don't know about being excellent but I do know it cost me in the long run.

P: Part of caring is sometimes to put yourself on the line.

C: That's going a bit far. I am not really into heroics you know. I have to keep my salary coming in to pay the bills.

P: Don't underestimate yourself, nor your determination to do what you feel is right. A small number of people can achieve great things as Margaret Mead told us, and I am sure that the recognition of these well-articulated reasons for the 'failures' in your inspection has not been without consequence. I am hearing that the inspectorate is changing.

C: Can't change soon enough for me.

P: These good things that come out of hardships take a long time to work their way through the system.

C: Sounds like the needs a laxative.

P: that wouldn't do half as much good as allowing nature to take its course. Just as we sometimes have to work through the difficulties with a child in the classroom slowly and carefully, so does any system have to be methodical and careful before it changes or adjusts its stance? You could be causing a whole lot of trouble by not paying attention.

C: That's a bit obtuse isn't it? Is paying attention the same as caring?

P: It is in a way because we pay attention to those things that we care about too. If we are not careful then we can soon lose the habit of caring. I like those two uses of the word. We use them so much and they have differences that are worth commenting on.

C: being careful is just an everyday term about looking after yourself, or crossing the road with your eyes open. It doesn't really mean full of care in the sense you are talking about. We have to say things like 'taking great care' or 'being extra careful' to get that sense of 'full of care'.

P: It is because words change their importance or even their meaning by their use and abuse that we have to be vigilant when we read about education. You note I use the word vigilant because I mean that you can't be too careful about these matters.

C: So is this a linguistic discussion? It's all very interesting but it's not my cup of tea.

P: There you go. What a wonderful metaphor that is. We could have a stirring discussion on metaphors and their use or abuse of language and meaning.

C: You can go there in your studies if you like, but I am more interested in teaching and I am warming to this idea of how the concept of care is important to our concept of education.

P: It is all about what we value in our lives, what we think is worth paying attention to and in the extreme what it is worth fighting for and being passionate about.

C: Now there's something I can identify with. I am passionate about children and their vulnerability and I am in awe of the task of teaching them.

P: the philosophical problem here is a practical one. And by that I mean that what we value, what we feel is worth fighting for may or may not be shared by others. The delusional person, the fundamentalist the conservative the insufferably non passionate people who we find in the educational world are all entitled to their own opinions and their own system of values and will fight for what they believe is worth fighting for. How do we know that we are not one of those? How do we establish what is worth fighting for and whether it is for the good of our schools?

C: Well I suppose we start by trying to understand what our schools are for. What is their purpose? We believe that they are for education not just for schooling or training or instruction. We value the big picture, the long term and the challenge of each individual rather than the short term the test results, the curriculum being covered.

P: And who are we to say that this is better? There are many who want short-term goals, like the student who wants to get the piece of paper that qualifies her for the job. I may want the prize of the title 'doctor' but it doesn't disqualify me from wanting all the other things too.

C: No you are right they are not mutually exclusive, but they are often set counter to each other in very important ways. We as teachers are expected to follow the recommendations of the , which are very often opposed to our own professional judgement.

P: Professional judgement seems to be of great importance to teachers.

C: Not all of them I can assure you! But to the thinking ones, the passionate –about- children ones, the passionate -about -their –own- subject ones the ones that really care about what they are doing and how they are doing it. They are bothered about corrupting their own professional judgement.

P: Corrupting. That's a tough word to use.

C: I use it advisedly. You watch teachers struggle with what they believe they should be doing and what they are required to do and you see many of them give up or rather give in.

P: But corrupt suggests it's dishonest, fraudulent, crooked, just plain bad for you.

C: It is bad. It is also foul and rotten and stinking and all the other epithets we could use for corrupting.

P: are you getting carried away with words? You said you didn't want a linguistic discussion.

C: I like these words, because they conjure up images of the way I feel. We are corrupting our young teachers, by telling them not to think for themselves. We are corrupting the education of the young by giving them the idea that passing the tests is what education is all about. Remember this and apply that and use this language and watch out for this trick question. It is not education. It is at best schooling, and at worst indoctrination.

P: but quite likely it is just instruction.

C: I suppose so. If I am optimistic I believe that teachers can remain true to their ideals. But it is increasingly difficult to be optimistic when older teachers are leaving because they are worn out before their time, and young teachers are leaving because they can't stand the pace or the money or the inconvenience. The teachers that seem to be able to stay the course are those that either care enough or continue against all the odds or those that don't care enough and get on with the job, following the recommendations and copying lessons plans from the Internet.

P: so here we are with our concept of care again. It is central to what we do and why we do it.

C: You know I think there are three kinds of teachers not two. One that you just identified who cares enough about children and teaching to brave their way through by bending the rules, or going around the rules and trying to keep a balance for the children as well as herself. Then there is one at the other end who is doing a job, following the rules applying herself and probably doing a good enough job if she is competent but who has the children for one year and then wipes the slate clean and starts with the next lot. But there is a third kind of teacher. One that breaks the rules. The ones that care so much, that are passionate about their beliefs and they are prepared to go against the grain. These are the ones who care so much that they are prepared to put themselves in the firing line.

P: I know teachers like that too. But they belong in two different camps because the religious right, the fanatics, the raving loonies of this world are the rule breakers and the martyrs just as the opposite end of this spectrum the gifted and far sighted teachers who can do amazing things with children.

C: Are there no ways that we can distinguish between these two?

P: Of course there are. It depends what they care about doesn't it?

C: Well they are both saying the same things. In the best interests of the children, and all that jazz.

P: They are saying that what they value they will die for.

C: where is this conversation going?

P: It is going to hell if you follow the religious thinking on this. The rule breakers have strong beliefs and if we understand and share those beliefs then we identify with that group. If we don't we simply say they are fanatics.

C: They are fanatics if they can only come up with "God told me to do this" or "our time on earth is a preparation for eternity" or "you need to be poor and humble in order to please God."

P: All those sorts of thinking are linked to beliefs that are very powerful. But they are belief systems. What I am interested in is the passionate teacher who believes in herself and the children and their learning. It is a rational based, knowledge and experience based passion that fires this person, not a group, or a church or an institution as such. It is sprung from the innermost desire to enable others to be truly themselves even if we don't like what they turn out to be or to believe in. It is a freedom. And it is caring about that freedom that exemplifies our concept of education.

C: Is this about the difference between knowledge and belief?

P: It is and it isn't. It is about knowledge in all its different ways and means and about sharing that knowledge but it is also about human experience and how we believe we can share that with others. No one knows the answers to all the questions about education and no one ever will, all we can know is that there are so many facets to understand and to appreciate that we have to choose for ourselves what we are going to believe in. We have enough evidence from our own experiences and from our teaching experiences too to form our own ideas about what is better or what is best in this circumstance or for this child.

C: and how do we know that we are acting rightly? Simply by our own defences?

P: I think we have to be more rational than that and be able to articulate our thinking. It is what we are doing in these conversations. We are trying to clarify in our own minds why it is that we are so bold and so brave and possibly so stubborn as to be a teacher still.

DIALOGUE 8

Does the size of school matter?

P: This is a difficult debate for me because I have such passionate ideas about how important the size of school is that I fear I will not be as open minded as I should.

C: Well that's where I come in.

P: I cannot begin to understand the phrase "economies of size" when it means simply that bigger is better.

C: That's a bit sweeping isn't it? It means that when we gather people or things together we have more to share out and it usually mean that we all benefit from the variety.

Bigger schools have better resources because they have more money.

P: sounds simple doesn't it. But it is simply not. Having more people together often means more noise, disruption more organization needed, and more rules more time spent on administration.

C: It does if things are administered badly. Larger schools, just as smaller ones, require to be administered effectively.

P: Some might argue that larger schools are more efficiently organised and administered because they have to be, whereas smaller schools can get away with being more casual.

C: A bit cynical that view, but true. But more money means more resources instead of one computer for the whole school then you could have a classroom full of computers and teach a whole class.

P: Exactly! I don't want to teach a whole class on computers. Where's the interaction fro one and where on earth is the idea of starting from where you are and teaching from that point forward? OK we can all be at different levels of ability and they can all play their own games, but I don't really think that is what you are supposed to be doing in a computer class.

C: All I m saying is that it is possible to teach a whole class some skills on the computer when they are all together and it is more efficient way of teaching these things. Than doing it one at a time because you have only one computer.

P: I agree with the point here. There seems to be an assumption that the only worthwhile teaching and learning happens on a one to one basis because children have 'unique' needs. Even if this were true, how would it be manageable. A main thrust of the Plowden report was that classes could be managed more effectively by organising children into groups.

C: By effective, Plowden was referring to classroom management, suggesting that children can be identified as having common needs and be grouped for teaching and learning purposes. Social constructivists would also argue that learning occurs best in a social context rather than on an individual basis, i.e. that children are not 'lone scientists'.

P: I don't. But you could say that this is a question of teaching style or preference rather than size of school. I can't use my money for my school in whichever way I want. Having a teaching preference would certainly influence how I spent the extra resources.

In fact just lately the smaller schools did well because they were allocated funding which meant they were better of than the bigger schools. (C: So resources are not an issue?

P: they certainly are an issue but not one that convinces me to believe that bigger is better. Even more money is not necessarily better when we are talking education.

C: So what do you put up as your defence?

P: I think it is mainly that the first school that children enter should be more manageable. The move from family life to nursery or to school should not be a move from family life to a military organization.

C: It is the worst thing for children to have this understanding of education. If schooling is to be enjoyed, which we are encouraged to make it so how can we imagine the transition if it is into a forbidding and enormously complex place and or organisation.

P: There seems to be an assumption that a large school has to be like a military organisation. Why? How does a school that is large necessarily have to resemble a military organisation? It could be organised into many smaller units. For example, Oxford and Cambridge universities are organised into colleges. I wonder if a smaller school fundamentally differs from a larger one in its rituals or whether the differences are superficial? Also, are all small schools the same – do they share common features? Doesn't it depend on a number of factors such as the head teacher and staff, parental involvement, catchment area etc?

C: Look, I know you had a terrible shock when you moved to Texas but your friends have confirmed just how relative is the term "small" or "Large as applied to schools. P: I know the UK teachers all think of three- 4 hundred being the biggest for primary schools and the US comments all think that would be a bit too small but preferable to the 8 to 9 hundreds that they have experienced.

C: I suppose we could talk about units within a school could we?

P: not yet. The question of size was always answered from the adult point of view, from the organisational point of view and only briefly about from the child's point of view. The thinking is that the teacher and the classroom are comfortable and each child learns gradually to be a part of the bigger unit of school then this is the impotent bit not the overall numbers. The children don't have a voice because they cannot tell me anything other than they have experienced. The one or two that have changed schools where size has been a relevant factor simply relate which teacher or lesson they liked. Comments about size of school don't seem to be a relevant topic of discussion until; the children were nine or ten and had some idea of how school could be different. Children have to take what is there and what is there is what they know. This is what school is because this is what I experiences as school. They cannot get outside, they can tell you all sorts of things and only the adults can comment on how they behave, seeming to like or dislike school, or lessons or playtimes or a whole host of other things.

C: What you are arguing is that they don't know any better but adults do.

P: In this case and in a limited way I am saying that. We have to try and imagine what it is like to be 3 or 4 or 5 and entering school.

We can do more than merely image can't we? We have all been 3 and 4 years old so we have all experienced what it is like. We can draw on this experience to empathise. Also, we would expect adults to know better than 3 and 4 year olds wouldn't we? Children

don't know what is best for them because they don't know the range of options. Adults have to make choices on their behalf.

Well prepared or not they have their family world exchanged for a classroom.

C: Or their day care unit or their child minder.

P: Yes, yes whatever but it is a change into something legal and mandatory and I think that a familiar building within the community, that is small enough in numbers so that each teacher is known and knows all the children is more family oriented than a large school which cannot offer that familiarity.

C: this is probably more a psychological discussion than a philosophical one.

P: It has a lot to do with psychology but the question of size is not a psychological one.

C: Many teachers argue that there is insufficient variety or diversity in small schools.

All they children live locally and with three or four teachers and sometimes less, it is difficult to get the full curriculum covered by specialists.

P: Like many families. They will all be the same race and culture whatever that means. There are few families who through adoptions, fostering grand parenting, blended families that are changing that picture too, but the family unit that a child has known is private, the public unit that it enters at school may well offer diversity, but from its own locality.

C: Is this a geographical preference?

P: no it isn't it is much more than that. The local school for some children is miles away and they have to go by bus or car but add that on top of a large school and you increase the differences of the transition. I am not saying that children can't cope. They do. They know no different.